

# (Godly Courtship) 04 Testimonies of Courtship

by Denny Kenaston

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*The speaker shares their testimony of how they and their wife struggled with premature emotional involvement and lack of self-control in their courtship, but were restored and transformed through God's guidance and transformation.*

**Duration:** 1:18:35

**Scripture:** Proverbs 18:22, Matthew 22:37

**Topics:** "Courtship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of cause and effect in our lives, both positively and negatively. He encourages the audience to strive for spiritual maturity and to seek God's guidance in their relationships and courtships. The speaker shares a personal story of emotional involvement with someone when she was younger and reflects on how her life would have been different if she had married him. The sermon also includes testimonies from two young couples who share their experiences and how they have applied the principles of God's word in their marriages.

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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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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Well, the next portion of our lessons will be the testimonies of two young couples.

This was suggested to me by one of the couples that's going to share with us. And as soon as the words fell on my ear, I knew that it was the right thing to do. Testimonies, illustrations out of real people's lives do so much to confirm the principles of God's Word to our hearts and that is the purpose for these testimonies.

Today, we have two fine young couples from our fellowships, Brother Myron and Sister Lisa Stolzus from the home congregation here. Brother Myron has been your chorus director all this week. Brother David and Sister Melinda Mass from Ohio.

And David has been one of the principals here this week. I guess maybe they'll share with you how long they've been married. I don't know that I can say exactly.

But they've been married enough years that they can speak from the experience of being married and what kind of an effect their courtship had on their marriage. And that is the purpose for these testimonies. The one couple, which we'll be sharing somewhat from a negative perspective, very graciously came to me and they were the couple that suggested that a testimony of failure be shared.

And they said that they were very willing to do that. Their prayer was that if they could save some other young people from making some big mistakes which take years to overcome, they would be glad to humble themselves and share from a point of failure. So we're going to have them share first and then the other couple will share from a point of blessing.

And we'll see how that they did for the most part follow what we've been sharing and the joys that have fallen upon their life because of it. So at this time, why don't we have both of the couples come? I'd like you to see their families and everything. So why don't all of you come at this time? Are yours downstairs, David? Are they sleeping? Okay.

Okay. Myron and Lisa, you can come. I thought about it this morning and I thought, you know, we don't need to just put a couple up here.

This is not a couple anymore. It's a family. Sorry for not mentioning that to you, David.

So we have Myron and Lisa Stolstos. Myron, maybe you can introduce the little ones. He is six.

And Kristen is three. And Jenna is one. Thank you.

I guess we'll go ahead and let you share. And then, David, you can introduce your family when you come up. It is indeed my blessing to be here today and to hear the words of our brother for the last three days.

It has been such a blessing. And I would just like, before I say anything, to say, please, hearing, please, hearing, 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.

I'm not going to be speaking of those today because even they, many times, were overshadowed 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 view 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 in yesterday and today 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 alluded to it this week, that we need to be married to Christ first. He had a message entitled, Marriage, Courtship, and Marriage. Marriage to God, and then courtship, and then marriage to someone else.

And I was not married to Christ. I love 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 benefits 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 that our vision, or my vision for our courtship, turned out to be my vision for my marriage. And it 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 a spiritual fellowship, but then we started releasing our affections toward each other before we even said 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. Just throw it away, because they did understand. But I didn't think they did.

I thought, well, it's been 20 or 30 years since they got married. They don't remember how it was, but they knew. And I was the ignorant one.

And I said it, and we would talk about it once or another. They just don't understand. As I said previously, 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 just coasting and actually feeding, rather than being self-controlled and watching over my life and being very concerned, you know, how much am I letting my emotions be in charge here? I just had free reign, no self-control. There were many a time that I thought, I'm okay, I'll know when to stop.

It's all right, I can handle it. I didn't know I was playing with fire. Because of this, because of these things, the lack of the self-control, the not being under the proper authority and going through the improper authority channels, the not having the proper vision of a godly courtship, and not being married to Christ.

Because of all of these things, 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, and these things have just really been laid fresh in my heart in a greater way than 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, I was defrauding her, and yet she was under pressure to please me.

And it didn't feel very 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 17 years old, and so I couldn't just go get married because I was too young.

And as we looked ahead and we saw I might not be able to get married until I'm 20 or 21, it just looked like an impossible situation. But the reason it looked like an impossible situation was because I had left go, and our emotions were already so heavily involved when they should have never been. We were so emotionally involved that at the time when we started courting, we should have been getting married.

You see, because I was young, there was a restriction put upon us that I cannot date or court until I'm 18 years old. The problem was we were. By our fellowship, by our sharing back and forth, by our intimacy in deep things and all of that, telephone calls, letters, and so forth, all of those things, we were ready to get married by the time that we started dating, and we had a long ways to go.

Another thing, another result is that my own spiritual life, what I did have, went down. And I'd like to emphasize that also. If you 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're feeling guilty before God, stop right there and examine what is wrong.

But that happened, and it also happened very much in my life. Another result, we came within a hair's breadth 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 the complete way 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 with that right away. It rather started with touching, holding hands, hugging, etc. Those type 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. Another result was that because of the rebellion, we did have some restrictions put upon us, one, that we couldn't get married for a long time yet, and we rebelled in our hearts. And so we'd get together on our dates.

We wanted to be alone as much as possible. We'd commiserate one with another. Oh, how bad this is.

Oh, I just can't understand this. They just don't understand. And all of these things that happened.

And 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 would get together, we'd want to leave as soon as we could and be alone. But this all was during our courtship. After we got married, I'm an optimist, I thought this will be just fine.

Now 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 He did.

And it's just the mercy of God. However, it wasn't too long until we had trouble. All of a sudden, I didn't have any respect for my wife.

The things that I wanted to do, she would feel uncomfortable with. She would balk at. She was not free to fully release herself to me.

I had some other problems, which stem back to the very beginning of courtship. I was not a leader, and so I was not providing security. I couldn't 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 and so forth. I wasn't sensitive.

I couldn't understand why things were going wrong. And so I was hurt because of her withdrawal from me. I was hurt.

I remember there would be some nights when we would be going to bed and we 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. And, oh, it was miserable sometimes because of that. And I was frustrated.

I pitied myself, you know, what is this, rather than realizing that it was my own needs and it was my own problems that were bringing this whole thing to the surface. Many times I was hurt. And then because of that, I'd be so touchy.

And if she would just make a comment as to laying some of the blame on me, oh, I was so touchy. I just, 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 further ahead spiritually than I was. The fact of our rebellion, we couldn't understand why things were not prospering.

And it was one time out of the desperation of her heart with another godly couple, which the brother is here today. She just dumped out her heart and he so wisely said, did you ever consider the rebellion in your heart? When we cleared ourselves of that 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.

And 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 married life 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 really showed me all that it was. And it was very interesting.

It was through a message. And I was sitting right there. And God just came upon me and I repented of my sin.

And God totally transformed our 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 on back and forth.

And our problems fell down to the ground. And God prospered our relationship with the children and all of those things. So I would like to say God 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 the way we did it. We still occasionally have things to work through. I still have personal struggles sometimes that I wonder if they aren't a result of my own lacks 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 that we did.

Do it differently, I plead. I guess the burden for sharing this today came to me. I think it was last Bible school.

Someone shared with me that she was talking with a group of young girls here about courtship. And one of them made the comment, well, what's all this big deal about hands off anyway? Mine and Lisa didn't and they're okay. And I just thought, but you have no idea.

The tears, the regret, the remorse, the guilt that it took to get to where we are today. You have no idea. We kept it pretty well hidden.

Not very many people knew we were doing the things we were. I guess nobody knew we were doing quite to the extent that we were. But the guilt is still there.

I mean, the fact is 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 touched on it the first day and I thought, these young people, what are they going to say? That's impossible. I mean, that's what we said.

You can't do it. I mean, the task is to do something we can't do. So 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 14, 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. But I gave him my emotions and I was sure when I turned 18 that he was going to ask me to marry him.

Well, he didn't. And sometime within the next year I realized that he wasn't going to and I had to lay that down. But then after we were married and we started having struggles, the thought would come to me, how would it be if I had married him? You know, you shouldn't even think those kind 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, when it came clear to me 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 affection. 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 affection. I just threw myself at him.

And as he related, consequently we were ready for marriage way too soon. And it caused all the problems that it did. When we started dating, I had decided way back when I was about 14 if I ever started, if I ever was courting, 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 was that it wasn't set in his heart like that. He agreed with me and he went along with it but he didn't have it fixed in his heart the way I had and consequently, I mean, one of the first times we were together in public we were holding hands already.

And of course we started out with, to 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 I'd go home, he'd leave, you know, and I'd go to my room and I just felt so guilty. I think about over our day and where we were and what we did and I felt so guilty.

And one fear I always had was that his dad or mom would ask him some pointy questions. And during the last, well, I guess 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' house. And sometimes I was just sure they could read the guilt on me.

And sometimes I just wished he'd 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 for our next date and I'd just tell him, we've 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 finally he agreed, yeah, we went too far.

We'd better back off, you know. And we'd set a line. Okay, from now on we're not going to do any more than just this.

Well, that lasted for the next date. By the next one he came, we already slipped. After a couple more, we had slipped 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 dated for, we courted for almost a year and a half.

And it was that way the whole time. I mean, it was, that's the way our courtship went from beginning to end. And when I think about our courtship, I just mostly have to put it out of my mind.

I just cannot think about it. It's too painful. It's too, all those things that we did, I just cannot think about.

So I cannot say that we had a happy courtship. We enjoyed being together, of course. We loved each other.

But, you know, he already went into all that. We spent 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, you know, I had a goal to have devotions together at the beginning. And so 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, well, I'm just thinking about it, go ahead and have our devotions now, or something like that.

And it's just, sometimes I'd wait and wait and wait, hoping he would say it first, but he never did. Hardly ever. And 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 marriage it would be different. And in public, he was a leader. He was outgoing.

He, you know, had led some of the discussions at church, and he could talk, and, you know, all of that. And I saw 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. I thought, no, 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. I mean, 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 settled into marriage, and it took about a month and a half until problems started arising. And it was pretty rough. And here again, I was all ready to go get some counsel from somebody, but he always held back.

You know, he didn't want people to know that, I mean, 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 headwaiter and waitress, but that wedding was the most miserable wedding of my life.

He 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'm miserable in my marriage.

I don't know what to do. He doesn't want to get help. I feel strung out.

It's not going right. And here's this young couple, and I know that if we would have done it the way they did it, things wouldn't be like this. And I sat there and cried like a baby.

I just, 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 a back road somewhere, and we parked there, and we talked, and we talked, and we prayed, and we cried.

I don't know if we came to any concrete solution, but at least we talked about it, and that went on for years. We were married, I guess, about three years until we finally saw the rebellion that 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 got better, but there was an awful lot. I mean, whenever something would go wrong, I'd blame it on him. Yeah, he was that way when we were dating, and he's still like that.

And it was just like, I just couldn't respect him the way I knew I should, the way I wanted to. And I'd start feeling like, I have to live the rest of my life like this. I mean, there's no way out.

Well, I'm married now, and I would look at other couples, and I'd wonder how many of them have struggled like this beneath the surface. How many of them are really 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. How in the world can you be married that long and have a relationship like they have? I mean, I knew theirs was for real, and I couldn't explain that one.

But when Myron came to the place that he did two years ago is 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. I'm not sure.

And it quit. How come we got family devotions? I mean, at my 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 want to have family devotions at our house. I want our children to grow up knowing a time of worship together as a family. And it didn't happen.

I let it go for a while, and I'd ask him, don't you think we should be having family devotions? Oh, well, yeah, and then we would for a while. It was the same thing as it was when we were dating. And I'm telling you, if your partner is like that when you're dating, they're going to be like that after you're married.

Marriage is not a magic cure. That's right. So, after he became the spiritual leader that he should have been, and 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 was terribly inferior, and it disappeared. And my respect for him grew.

Our relationship became a loving relationship instead of so tense and touchy. And I just love God. I mean, you saw our family.

We have a wonderful relationship. And God did it. That's right.

But like Myron said, you don't need to come 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.

Well, I don't think I need to say a whole lot. All of us know how hard that was. But thank you, Myron and Lisa.

That will fall to the blessing of many a couple. Thank you for being honest and sharing your hearts. All right.

At this time, we'll turn to Brother David and Sister Melinda. That's all right. Let him squeal.

Beautiful sound. Bless us with two children. And we can certainly say we are glad for both of them and for what God has done for us.

This here is my son Jared, my son. And this is Jason, two sons. And we are rejoicing in them even though we have a more fussy one this time.

Well, I guess this morning as I was listening to the message and Brother Myron and Sister Lisa's testimony and all of that, I just realized before God how blessed we are. We don't deserve what God has done for us. And I don't know.

In my younger years, I don't know where I picked up even these convictions that we practiced and all of that. I don't know where I picked them all up. But God just blessed us very richly.

And basically, we're just going to go through our courtship period and what took place in the different phases. We're going to talk a little bit about before our courtship and then getting into the beginning of our courtship, what we did at the beginning of our courtship, and then a little bit as throughout the courtship and finally the marriage and what it's like now. Just bear with us.

It may take a little time, but we'll try to hurry. Well, for myself, I don't know how to say as far as the affection, giving the affection part, as Brother Denny was speaking about that, I believe it was yesterday, that he was speaking about giving our affection. And I must say, in my younger years from, I don't know, maybe from age of 12 even to up until I was probably 18, I would say, I can't say honestly that I didn't give my affection in here to someone else and to different ones.

You know what I mean? I think it seems like all young men go through that. And I just praise God for the teaching we had. It's so right.

Keep that affection. Let it grow, but keep it for the right one. And I can't honestly say that I kept it altogether, although I did not let it, I did not bring it forth in the open, but it was inside.

So basically, I guess I was waiting on the will of God. I was what I call asleep. God put me to sleep.

And again, there again, it's not like that I went to sleep and I never had any struggle after that. But I came to the place, God brought me to the place where I learned to rest in God, where I learned to go to sleep in God. When it would come up again, I could just bring it down and I could rest in God.

And this is a challenge I want to put before you. Maybe you're weighing someone in your mind and all of that. And it happens.

It happens. It comes up. And I just place this challenge before you.

Can you rest in God? Can you trust God? And I just simply had to come to that place where I rested in God, knowing that God will bring the right one at the right time and it's going to be the best. And that's what God does. God is a good God.

And God is a God who wants to give His children the best. And I came to that place and I just rested in that because I wanted the best. I didn't want to mess up my life.

And I wanted the best for my life. And I just brought it before God that way and said, God, I want the best. And I don't remember where I picked that statement up.

I think it came across the tape somewhere one time. It was concerning a whole different message, I believe. But it was brought to my attention that God wants to give us the best.

And I said, God, that's what I want. I want the best for my life. For my life's companion, I want the best.

I don't want some second choice. I want the best. And I put my faith in God that way that He's going to bring the best to me.

Well, I left it at that. And I don't remember exactly how old I was at that point. I think I was somewhere around 16 when it started moving in that direction until I was 18.

It was pretty well settled in my heart that I'm going to wait on God and trust God. And so, from then, I didn't get married until I was 22. And from then until 22, I had my mind free, basically.

My mind was free to serve God and just to walk with God and to be a blessing. And it came up now and then. It came up again.

And especially over a time when you'd go to a wedding and you'd see all the beauty of it all, that desire rose up again. But you, again, just had to come back and lay it before God. Well, about three months before we started our courtship, it seemed like God was starting to knock on my door.

It seemed like He was starting to bang on my door. My mother came to me and she was wondering if I'm still sleeping. Because I had told her I was sleeping.

Isn't God waking you up? And I said, no, I'm still sleeping. Well, that following fall, that was in the summertime, that following fall, I started becoming aware that God had someone for me. I guess I'll say this.

I had this special feeling in my heart already for quite a long time. But I didn't know if it was the will of God or not. It was toward my wife.

It seemed like God had earlier prepared me for it and so on. But I didn't see God. I didn't know for sure.

Is this the will of God or is it just some feeling I have? So, we started our courtship about three months prior to that. I began to seek God earnestly and pray earnestly concerning this one and see if God, if this is really the one that you have for me and for my life. It seemed like every time I came before God that way, and you have to know God.

You have to know His voice. If you don't know His voice, you're just going to go by your own feeling. But you're going to have to learn to know His voice.

And you can do it now. Learn to know His voice so that when this happens, you can know assuredly it's His voice. But He just began to impress upon my heart.

One. Not two. Not another.

One. And it just seemed like every time I prayed about it, there was just no question. He came back again.

This one. And this was all in my own private quarters. I hadn't left it out to anyone except I did leave it out to my brother-in-law now, Carl.

And we talked about it, I think. I forget when it was. It was before they were also 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 that at all.

It's not good. 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. And I didn't hurry.

There's 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 until I, like Denny said, mustered up enough courage and inward grit, all of that, which I just wanted to be sure that this was right. And I asked God for different confirmations, and He granted them, and so forth.

And they weren't some handwriting on the ceiling, you know, or something like that. They were just simply those deep impressions 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, 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.

Praise God, another just blasting confirmation. They said, you know, we've known it all along. Praise the Lord.

And that was a blessing to me. I went out of that room rejoicing. I already had my first clearing, and I was with my own parents.

And they had blessed it. Well, they were all excited as well as was I. And we made arrangements to contact her parents. I think that very night, we made arrangements to meet with her parents.

And so I went and met with her parents. We got together at a restaurant out in the parking lot. I said, well, this is what God is showing me.

And I was just opening myself up to them. They asked for my testimony of 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 it, on that go-ahead. I asked 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 the only marriage 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 even had given me just a few things to think about as far as guidelines they're going to set out for us.

And 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 clear it 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. She's under their authority. She was living in Pennsylvania at the time.

And I was in Ohio. And so they called her. And they asked her concerning if she would agree to this, to start this relationship and so forth.

And I can say on this here point, I think it's very important that it goes through her authority. If you just take the other side of it, a boy 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. And you're putting her under a lot of pressure. This way, she's totally free.

She's been under the authority of her parents all this 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, and 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. Glory! And I'll let her share that part of it here. But after that, well, her parents then came to me and gave me the response.

And then they gave their full okay to go ahead and start this relationship and so on. And so I gave her a call, of course. Our parents at that time, somewhere in that time, I don't know exactly.

It was before we started dating and so forth. They set out some guidelines for us as a couple in our courtship. And what they want, they were not necessarily, what I say, strict rules and regulations and all 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. And for instance, one was going home at a certain time. Then another one was especially, this one I think is of great importance, and that is after dark, not to be driving out after dark.

Even just taking her home, they set out that guideline for us that we just take one of our brothers or sisters along. And just for that extra protection, so that temptation doesn't take a hold. And we gladly gave ourselves under that.

That was no problem. We gladly received all 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 has blessed our whole courtship, our married life in all. And I just want to put it out here for you, and Denny's already touched on it, but I think it's a key if you're going to have a good courtship. And Brother Meyer's sister Lisa can identify with this, I'm sure.

And that is, well 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 we have the physical in marriage. And he said, right now, where you're starting in, right 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 foundation 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, although with caution. Our first date, we just held it in, and it was out here. You were living with Paul at that time? Okay, you were living at Aaron's at that time, okay.

But we had our first date over at Paul Hershberger's while they were still living here. And on our first date, and I think this is some keys for you to set, if you're thinking on this term at all, or just something to place in your conviction. We related our conversion experiences to each other on that first date, how we got saved.

I mean, if we're going to build on a spiritual foundation, let's start it out right. Let's start around centering on, well, how did you start in your Christian life? And we did that. We shared it together, and that's a real blessing.

And then after that, I felt like we need to have a clear understanding from day one, what we're going to do in our relationship, in our courtship. And we discussed various convictions on both of our parts, and they were hands-off courtship. We both had that conviction deep in our hearts that we want to hands-off courtship.

We want to be free from all 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, so everything was basically done in the open. We had our private times when we could talk together, but we didn't go behind locked doors. We tried to, as much as was possible, to just be around most.

We were in a different room, but our families were usually in the other room, or maybe 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 discouraged that, because it brings that drawing together too fast, and we're not ready for that. Well, as we move into our courtship experience, we just can't explain the blessing that we share 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 and so on. But we just spent so many beautiful times in prayer together. First of all, just rejoicing in how God brought us into this courtship, and then in how God was leading us on.

And right at that time, we were also going through a transition back in Ohio with church situation and all of that. And her father had said 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. 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 attribute it back to taking those right steps and being under authority. Not chafing under the authority, but submitting ourselves under it. And in feeling God's presence and all, it just brought a sense of deep conviction in our hearts.

And when you're in the presence of God, you don't feel like doing things that are not right to do. And building and focusing on a spiritual foundation in our times together, and so on, as we focused on that, and as we built around that, and had that presence of God in our midst, it just brought the fear of God on our hearts. And we can honestly say, maybe we're strange, but we can honestly say we had not many temptations to even hold hands or anything.

In fact, I really can't remember any time where I was even thinking about reaching out and holding our hands. It wasn't there. We were building on a different foundation.

It was based around spiritual things. We kept that. And even sitting real close.

We just had that as a standard. It was written on our hearts. And we just wouldn't do it.

And even, just to bring this out, that even when we did accidentally touch, which it's going to happen, you can almost guarantee it, if you're together, there's a time or two that you might accidentally brush the other one, and we would excuse ourselves, apologize to them, and go on. And 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 we wanted to do for our own lives. It was a law in our heart. You say, oh, that's no fun.

That's bondage. But it was a law in our heart, 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 parents, none of her family was there.

And I stayed about an hour. We were just in the living room talking wedding plans. It was after we were engaged and so on.

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 really 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, did we have any tests about staying 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. This was in the area of leadership. Someone from another fellowship was giving us some instruction and so on.

We were like, 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 or not and go on.

Really, it proved out to be a blessing. It wasn't something that we couldn't live with. Well, coming to a marriage like this, what a blessing.

It was so rich. It just seemed like God dumped His blessings on us. We felt so unworthy of Him dumping His blessing on us like that, like He did on our wedding day.

Really, we were walking around dazed practically on our wedding day. It was just awesome at what God did for us. The honor and the respect that we felt for one another, it was great.

To this day, the honor and the respect that we feel toward each other, it's great. I think it all stems back to learning to refrain ourselves, to keep ourselves. Also, another thing I didn't mention is that even though we didn't know it up here, we were consciously doing what Denny was saying.

We were coming together. We were coming together slowly. I remember oftentimes we wrote together for a while, being she was in Pennsylvania and so on.

I remember many times I was cautious what I wrote because I didn't want this thing to come too fast. I wanted to take it easy. We weren't quite ready yet for everything.

Really, what I was doing, I was holding back somewhat on that affection of love. Not that my heart wasn't full of it, but I was restraining it purposely so that our relationship wouldn't go too fast. Well, God blessed us tremendously on our wedding day.

There's no time to go into any details. The honor and the respect we felt toward each other and afterward. We went out west on our honeymoon.

We had like a three-day drive where we were just together in the car, driving down the road. There was no stress. We were just driving.

We had plenty of time. I remember many times we just sat and wept at what God did for us and the awesomeness of God's presence with us. We felt His presence in the car.

He was going with us. I just remember that first night too. God brought a verse to my attention as I lay there in bed and I couldn't sleep.

I was just laying there and just reflecting on the day and reflecting on the new responsibilities that God had placed on my shoulders and I felt very inadequate to carry out all these responsibilities. As I lay there before God, I just remember His presence coming there and ministering to my heart. He brought this verse to my attention in Proverbs 18, verse 22.

It says, He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord. I just felt that favor so strongly and I remember it came back. A couple days later as we were driving down the road, that 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 in our marriage. There was nothing major the first year. It went very smoothly for us.

As our first son came along, we had some adjustments to make. They weren't real major adjustments. Our second son, I think, has 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're experiencing now. Because if we come into a disagreement or something like that, we always know where we can go to where we agree. And that's on that spiritual foundation.

We can always come back to it. Even though in the social, in the physical, maybe we don't see everything eye to eye, in that we can always come back to the spiritual. We can always come back to that 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. And we recommend it.

We recommend it. It's worth it. I'm going to leave her to share her end of the story.

Well, I feel very worthy to be a testimony of this today. But I'm very thankful that I had the opportunity to be true of being under teaching a lot of what you've been hearing for these past few days. I can say too that I, in my younger years, I had failed in IMSO, especially in the area of keeping my affection for just one.

But I repented from that completely and God gave me a beautiful time of... I just feel He really blessed me with a completely pure courtship and even though there are 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 ever started our courtship. And that was a blessing of hiding our affection for one another.

I also had a special feeling for David for some time. But I did... It was like God impressed it in my heart to just keep it. And I didn't know how he felt towards me.

And that was a real blessing to 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 faith stretcher, like he said, you know, because 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 probably a lot of you girls face those. 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.

Another thing, it required constant surrender where I just constantly had to lay my desire for marriage on the altar. It's not a wrong desire. But I had to constantly lay it down.

And that also was a good thing for my spiritual life. Another thing, when David did, when my parents came to me and told me that he was interested in me, I knew that he had marriage in mind because he was not flirting around earlier. It was not, there was no puppy love there.

I just knew he was for real. I knew that he felt that that was God's will. And that was a real strength to me.

Another point was that David's being under authority made it easier for me, made it easier for me to respect him and to submit to him and to reverence him. That's the woman's place. And I'd just like to say that it made it easy all along.

Because he was under his authority, I knew that he would be, he would have authority too because of that. Also his being a spiritual leader brought such a security to me. I didn't experience that growing up like I should have.

And it just brought a real strength and security to me. Another thing I'd like to share is that the biggest proof that I could tell that David loved me was the respect he showed towards me. The first thing was respecting my convictions about a hands-off courtship.

And also, I mean, it was like he showed agape love to me instead of all these other kinds of love. I felt that agape love. And also treating me like a queen with courtesies like opening car doors and allowing me to

go first.

And I'm so thankful those haven't stopped after marriage either. I think 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 was because I had kept my emotions back all this time.

But I spent a week praying and fasting about it. It almost seems silly to me to pray and fast about it because I knew so clearly. I realize not everybody does.

But I just knew this was God's will. And I made a commitment there. I almost felt funny that I didn't have more of a feeling of love towards him.

But I see it now. It brought a deep commitment in my heart that is carried through our married life too. When rough times come, I know we're for each other.

And that has been a real strength there. And even when we were engaged, 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, because of that respect, we can work things out. And he already shared 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 just am very thankful for God's blessings to me that he allowed me to have this opportunity.

Well, thank you for sharing. I realize time has gotten away. But I do believe that the Lord put the icing on the cake.

These testimonies, oh, they just are so solidified. They've solidified everything that has been shared. You know, it's one thing for me to get up here and give you a bunch of ideas, or shall I say new ideas, about courtship and all of that.

But it's another thing to bring living illustrations before us and look at it and realize that it's true, that cause and effect happens. On the positive side, or on the negative side, cause and effect happens. You know, I just want to close the meeting by reaffirming again my encouragement to each one of you to go for the gold.

I think that you can tell by now it takes some real spiritual maturity to go for the gold. So while you're waiting, why don't you grow up? Set your hearts. Mature in the Lord.

Know the presence of God like our brother shared, so that God can guide you into the right marriage relationship and guide you through your courtship and bring you up to the marriage altar and make you one. Get to know God and God will give you the same.

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