

Holy Harmony - Part 3

by Elisabeth Elliot

Elisabeth Elliot emphasizes the importance of aligning our wills with God's, practicing self-denial, and adhering to biblical principles in relationships and holiness.

Duration: 57:40

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:12

Topics: "Unity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of character in relationships and marriage. He uses the example of a woman in the Bible who displayed qualities such as politeness, energy, hard work, and quickness. The speaker emphasizes that men should surrender to God's will, perform their duties faithfully, and expect God to guide them in finding a wife. He also highlights the significance of watchfulness and setting character as a priority in relationships. The speaker encourages men to prioritize their responsibilities and trust in God's guidance.

Transcript

We've been talking about holiness and what a holy harmony entails. It means walking with God, in company with Him. Our wills aligned with His.

As it says in the Bible, can two walk together except they be agreed. If we're going to walk with Him and call ourselves Christians at all, then the rule of our life must be, thy will be done, not my will. And it was back in the Garden of Eden that the very first man and woman chose their own will instead of the will of God.

That's where it all began and that's what you and I perpetuate, isn't it? By choosing what we want rather than what God wants. But God in His mercy continues to give us daily opportunities to say, yes, Lord. And I got a telegram this morning or a telephone message this morning from my dear friend Carolyn Teague and she had hoped to be here, but she began the message by saying, a chance to die.

My airline tickets can't be used on these blackout days, so I can't be there. Well, the phrase, a chance to die, she got from the title of my biography of Amy Carmichael, a chance to die, which was one of her favorite expressions. See in any difficulty a chance to die.

In other words, a chance to say no to myself and yes to God. That's what the cross is about, isn't it? Jesus had to die to His own will and desire and accept the will of His Father. And you and I cannot expect less than that.

I've just recently read a 19th century novel, which I've never heard of before. And apparently it was the second bestseller in its day, second only to Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe. It's a book called *The Wide, Wide World* by Susan Warner.

And the interesting thing about it is that it is reprinted by the feminist press. Now, it is about as far from being a feminist book as anything you could imagine, but a very card-carrying feminist writes an afterword in which she says, the reason the novel has power to move readers now lies in our contradictory relationship to its heroine and the heritage she represents. It embodies uncompromisingly the values of the Victorian era.

Now, this writer obviously doesn't know very much because the values which are embodied in the book are much, much older than the Victorian era. They come straight out of the Bible. But that's all she knows.

Ideology of duty, humility, submission to circumstances and its insistence on self-sacrifice are infuriating to some, for these doctrines challenge everything the 20th century has stood for in politics, psychology, and morals. The novel's ethic of submission violates everything the feminist movement has taught women about the need for self-assertion. It negates the psychological emphasis on the dangers of repressed anger.

It rejects totally the liberal belief in self-determination and freedom of choice. Well, she's absolutely right about all of that. The only thing she's a little bit off on is how old these ideas are.

And so I've written to this lady to tell her that there are people in the 20th century who are just as outdated as Susan Warner. And it might shock her to know that some of us are not only not infuriated, but we subscribe to exactly the same set of principles. And they go back, of course, to the cross, to what Christianity is all about.

There's nothing new in Susan Warner's novel. It's just the story of a girl who, she's just a little girl when she begins, and she tries to accept the will of God in very humble, ordinary circumstances. We talked last night about God being a sovereign Lord.

The scripture calls him the blessed controller of all things. He's the one that's got the whole world in his hands. If you really believe that, and you really believe that he's trustworthy, then we shouldn't have any difficulty, should we, in saying, yes, Lord, I want your will because I really do believe that you could do a better job of running my life than I can.

If we can believe that God can run the galaxies and the tides and the molecular dance that I'm told by scientists goes on every second of every minute of every hour of every day in everything in the universe, that exquisite, precise dance of atoms and neutrons and protons and all the other things that I don't understand, if God can engineer all that, isn't it just plain ridiculous for us to doubt that he can handle our lives better than we can? But we are ridiculous people, aren't we? And we do doubt. Some of you, and I'm always at a loss when I speak to a singles group because, of course, I don't have a poll of where you are in your own feelings and desires, but I can fairly well guess that some of you desperately want to get married. I would guess that some of you do not want to get married at all.

You're not desperate about it. In fact, you feel quite negative about it. Some of you are perfectly at peace with your singleness, believing just what we've been talking about, that God is in charge and that if God sees marriage to be a good thing for you, then he will give it to you in his time.

And there may be other variations on the theme. I'm not going to try to sort out all the fine distinctions, but I want you to know from the beginning that I am not taking it for granted that everybody in this room is panting and gasping, hoping to get married. Not at all.

But we do believe that there is a divine design, that there is a purpose, that he died for us so that we, awake or asleep, might live in company with him. And his ultimate purpose for us, whether it's marriage or singleness or divorce or widowhood or whatever else, his ultimate purpose is to bring us to that perfect fulfillment and joy, which is any father's desire for his child. Any of you who are parents, and I'm sure there are some single parents here, know that you couldn't possibly want less than the very best for your child.

And I, as a grandmother, realize that it goes on and on. I can't want anything less than the best for my grandchildren. Well, how could God, who loves us far more than any earthly father can love us, want less than the best? So that's where we begin.

God's hidden wisdom, his secret purpose, framed from the very beginning to bring us to our full glory. The powers that rule the world have never known it. If they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

And so on that basis, we can trust him. In his love, we can surrender ourselves to his will, and we can accept the daily bread that he gives to us. And as Jesus told about in teaching on prayer, he said, if a child asks his father for bread, would he give him a stone? If he asks him for fish, would he give him a scorpion? If he asks for an egg, would he give him a snake? But the problem is that some of our requests are scorpions and snakes and stones, and we don't know that.

It says in Psalm 84:11, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. So if marriage is a good thing, and that's the thing that you are longing for, then you can rest assured that in God's time, he will give it to you. But we don't know that that's really God's will for us.

We don't know the future. It's none of our business. The past is gone, and that's God's.

The future is not here yet, but God is already there, and it belongs to him. So it's today. It's this one day that is God's gift, and it's this one day until the sun goes down that God wants us to trust him.

And as Robert Louis Stevenson said, any man can bear his burden, however heavy, until the sun goes down. Don't take on the burdens of tomorrow, and I know what that's like. When I was single and wanted to be married, I was thinking, oh, a whole lifetime of singleness.

I couldn't stand the thought of being an old maid missionary. And then, of course, when Jim died, that was my immediate thought again. Well, if Jim were coming back next weekend, I wouldn't be in a state of collapse.

But thinking of 10 years, 20 years, 50 years, the rest of my life as a widow is a burden too heavy to bear. Nobody was meant to. It's not our business.

So it is here in the context of singleness today on this beautiful Saturday in Colorado that God wants to teach you his love. The love of God teaches us not loneliness, but communion. He wants to reveal to us his will, which is not misery, but joy.

He wants to prove to us his trustworthiness, which is not fear, but peace. And he wants to make known day by day, hour by hour, his abiding intimate presence with us. Here, where perhaps it seems as though he's doing nothing, paying no attention to you, or his will perhaps seems to some of you obscure and frightening.

He isn't doing what you want him to do. He isn't answering your prayers. Where he seems most absent, the Lord is quietly, steadily, and in hidden, unimagined ways operating to work out his perfect plan and purpose for us.

But don't forget, he's not going to do the whole job. It's for you and me to offer to him our trust and to offer to him the whole of our lives. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.

Now I don't want to omit the subject of chastity. It's something that we need to be reminded of again and again. It is the Christian rule which never changes.

As C.S. Lewis puts it in his book, *Mere Christianity*, and C.S. Lewis has a way of just boring right into the heart of any subject, and when C.S. Lewis has said it, it has been said as well as it can ever be said. So not presuming to be able to improve on him, I'm going to quote a few things that he says here. The rule is either marriage with complete faithfulness or total abstinence.

And that is it. In 1 Corinthians 6, if you don't want to take C.S. Lewis' word for it, I'll give you the Apostle Paul's, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6.12 says, 6.13, it is not true that the body is for lust.

A lot of scriptures will bear many varying interpretations, but I don't think this is one of them. It's one syllable words. It is not true that the body is for lust.

It is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Do you not know that your bodies are limbs and organs of Christ? Shun fornication. This is verse 18, 19, and 20.

Every other sin that a man can commit is outside the body, but the fornicator sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a shrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit? And the Spirit is God's gift to you. You do not belong to yourselves.

You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God in your body. And then in 1 Thessalonians, the fourth chapter, in case you are one of those who has a hard time figuring out what the will of God is, here's a very clear and unequivocal statement, 1 Thessalonians 4.3. This is the will of God that you should be holy.

You must abstain from fornication. It's very interesting that using a very broad term like holy, Paul immediately narrows right down on the first thing, which is likely to destroy us, most likely to destroy us. Sexual sin, and the word fornication is a very broad word that includes every kind of sexual sin.

Generally, it's understood to mean sexual activity between people who are not married. It certainly does mean that, but it means a lot more than that. Homosexuality, adultery, all the other sexual sins would be under this heading.

So this is the will of God that you should be holy, which means, down to specifics, you must abstain from fornication. Each one of you must learn to gain mastery over his body, to hallow and honor it, not giving way to lust like the pagans who are ignorant of God. And it's no wonder that we get confused nowadays because the message that's coming to us so loudly and so inescapably and insistently from the world daily is, it's your body.

It's your life. You can do anything you want with it. If it feels good, do it.

You owe it to yourself, et cetera. So we think of the sexual instinct as a very difficult and contrary one, and it's not natural to say no to it. Well, as Lewis says, either Christianity has gone wrong or our instincts has gone wrong.

Which do you think is the more likely? He takes up the modern saying that sex is a mess because it has been hushed up for so long. And Lewis cuts right through that nonsense and says, nothing has been more ventilated and aired than the subject of sex. To say that it has been hushed up is just plain ridiculous.

The other expression, it's nothing to be ashamed of. Of course, true. He says, not sex itself nor its pleasures.

Christianity thoroughly approves that matter is good. God became human, et cetera. We will have some kind of a body in heaven and marriage, according to scripture, is glorified.

But the state into which sexual instinct has gotten is shameful. People often use the analogy of eating. They say sex is just a natural function like eating or drinking.

And Lewis says, no, it's not. It's not exactly like eating or drinking. It's never been in that category.

I lived with primitive people in the jungle and I can testify to the fact that eating and drinking were things which were done publicly. Sex, even in a tribe of people who wore not one stitch of clothing, they wore a string around their waist or around their hips, if you call that a stitch. I don't.

But these people were very, very modest and very strict about sexual activity. Nobody got away with fornication. Any kind of sex outside of marriage was punishable by death.

Period. Case closed and it worked fine. But as Lewis says, if it were in a category with food, he said, can you imagine a society in which half the world makes food its main interest, dribbles and smacks its lips over pictures of food and will pay money to go into a theater where the curtain is slowly opened and somebody comes out on the stage with a great platter of food with a cover on it and everybody sits on the edge of their seats while he slowly lifts the cover off.

This is Lewis making obvious the absurdity of saying that sex is something exactly like food. St. Augustine prayed, Lord, make me chaste, but not yet. And I think all of us can sympathize with that.

We want to be holy, but not quite yet, Lord, and let's not do it all at once. Let's have a little fun first. So we have these difficulties in desiring chastity, the first of which is our warped nature.

We are born sinners. And all the propaganda around us is saying it's natural, it's healthy, it's unreasonable to resist it. And as one young man said to me after he heard me speak in a church on this subject, he came up and he said, well, holy cow, lady, you got to have sex.

And I said, well, where did you get that idea? If you think it's impossible, read Lewis's Narnia books. He makes it so clear in those children's books that we are never to ask whether a thing is possible. When a thing must be done, never think of the impossibility.

Just do it. And there are some wonderful illustrations of that which I wish I had time for this morning. And this word repression, which Freud has made such a popular word, it doesn't mean suppressed.

What we're talking about when we talk about sexual control is not repression. Repression is denial and suppression. Excuse me, I've confused you there.

No, repression and suppression are two different things. Since Freud's day, I looked them both up in the dictionary and they really were almost synonymous. But Freud has made repression sound like a very dangerous thing.

It's something denied and something thrust into the subconscious. But to resist a conscious desire is not repression. Lewis says, virtue, even attempted virtue, brings light, and indulgence brings fog.

This whole business of what is nowadays called relationships is a very dangerous game. And there are some very dangerous so-called Christian books on the subject. I am just aghast at some of the things that Christian publishers are turning out and well-known Christian leaders are writing.

And Lars is going to tell you about one book that carries a blurb from me on the back. And he'll explain all that, but I do not at all endorse that book anymore. I endorsed the original manuscript that was sent to me, but it has been drastically changed since then and I went ahead and used the endorsement.

So I don't know what to do about that. But I call it a very dangerous game, first of all because we are sinners, secondly because we live in a world that has so drastically distorted what the world has always understood. The most primitive peoples have always understood that sex is to be reserved for a very exclusive relationship, even in societies where there is polygamy.

And the Alca Indians, with whom I did live, permitted polygamy. But a husband who had three wives had to be faithful to those wives. He couldn't go helping himself to somebody else's wife, nor did any other man help himself to one of Dabu's three wives.

This was an economic necessity in that culture where there were 53 women and children and 7 adult men. And the 7 men had to provide food and take care of all of those widows whose husbands had been speared to death. So polygamy became an acceptable thing, but it was a very generous man who was willing to take on more than one wife because it was a full-time job for all of them to feed that tribe.

So it certainly had nothing to do with concupiscence. They were being very unselfish to do this. But the confusion, worse confounded by these books, I don't know what to do about it except to say my piece when I have an opportunity and I don't know anything else to do but to take you back to the scriptures, to the very few paradigms that we have in scripture about what we're to do with this dangerous business of relationships between the sexes.

Ann Landers is a very wise woman and she gets a lot of outrageous letters and I thought I'd read you this one. Dear Ann, I'm 36 years old, a successful career woman who makes over \$100,000 a year. I'm no beauty, but I'm certainly presentable.

Why can't I hold a man's interest? In my entire life I've had two lovers, one for three years, the other for six years. Both times I was dumped. Several months ago I met a lawyer who was rich, generous and attractive.

He liked me a lot. He called every day and we went out every weekend. After two months he cut me dead.

And here's where it gets dangerous. I called him four or five times to find out what went wrong. He said he had been busy.

Two months later I learned from a friend that he thought I was, quote, very immature, unquote, and that I took the relationship too seriously. Here it gets more dangerous. I wrote him a very loving letter hoping he would be touched by it.

He didn't respond, so guess what she did? She phoned him. As soon as he heard my name he hollered, oh hell, it's you. A second later he said, can you call me back tomorrow night? I'm in the middle of something.

I didn't call back and neither did he. What's wrong? I can't figure it out. We seemed so well suited to one another.

Can you give me a clue, Anne? Signed, Lonely in Maryland. Dear Maryland, a good therapist may be able to help you understand how you are perceived by the men you go out with. From what you've written I would say you are too aggressive and too willing to let men treat you shabbily.

Another case of low self-esteem. I don't think she's very wise on that reply, but of course Anne Landers is not a Christian and has no idea that God has given us some directions along these lines. And I want to read you a story which is so opposite from that one.

I hope that you will be able to draw your conclusions for yourself, but I will certainly say a few things after this one. My way of introduction to this, Lars and I travel a lot and we meet wonderful young Christians. Very many, very beautiful, very attractive, very dedicated, holy Christian women.

Far more than men. And I think it's very obvious to all of us that whenever there's a singles conference the men are in the minority. And what I always want to say to the men who come to something like this is, are you blind? What don't you see? What is it you're looking for? And we could certainly have a conversation and start a marriage bureau because I've had, just in the last few weeks, I've had two letters from men saying, where are these Christian women? Where are these virgins? I don't know any of them.

Would you please introduce me? Well, I'm not going to give you their names if you want them. And I also, you know, we know both sides. We know very strong Christian men, very few of them unfortunately, but we do know some.

I got a letter from a 28-year-old army officer who said, I am 28 years old and still a virgin, but he said I have had to fight every inch of the way to preserve my virginity. And he told me some hair-raising stories about things that women had done to attempt to rob this Christian man of his virginity. So we pray about it, we talk about it, Lars and I agonize about it.

And every now and then I have a chance to say something about it. Well, this is a story, again, from the early 20th century, a man who was born in the 19th century. His name is Charles M. Alexander.

He wrote a good many gospel hymns and he traveled as a song leader with D.L. Moody for many years when he was a young man. And he had been looking for seven years for the perfect wife. And like many young men, I suppose in his day and undoubtedly today, he had a list of the qualifications that he was looking for.

But he was traveling continually with D.L. Moody around and around the world. He was never in one place very long. He didn't have a chance to establish what you would call relationships.

And we didn't have such things when I was a young person a thousand years ago either. Relationships. It's a word that has made the game more dangerous.

As soon as you start talking about, I am in a relationship, I want to say, wait, stop, hold it. What do you mean? And I have never yet had anybody be able to tell me anything very clear about what they mean. Well, I don't know.

I mean, he's just really neat. And, you know, I mean, well, it's just like really a neat relationship. And well, he's just really special.

And I said, well, are you engaged? Oh, no, no, no, no, not engaged. Are you going steady? Well, nobody goes steady nowadays. We don't even use that kind of language.

But what does this book say? Does it talk about that kind of relationships? So this man, Charles M. Alexander writes, I had reserved the right in my mind to choose my own wife and had decided that she must have this and the other qualities of mind and heart, but had never been able to find notice. He doesn't say of beauty, this and the other qualities of mind and heart. Those were essentials, but had never been able to find one who combined all the desired qualifications.

During the Christmas season of 19 three, which I was spending alone in London, I surrendered the whole matter to God. Now this is what a holy man does. He surrenders his desires to God, never dreaming that his answer would come so quickly or that Birmingham would be the place where I should find my wife.

During an afternoon meeting in Bingley hall a week later, I noticed a young lady upon one of the platform seats. Immediately a feeling came over me that there was the answer to my prayer. I did not know who she was, but observed her closely and grew to love her.

Mind you, here's the song leader sitting on the platform and he's looking at this lady and he's growing to love her. For I saw that she was after the salvation of souls. I noticed that in the after meetings, she usually went down to the back of the hall and was not afraid to stay late and work long and earnestly, sometimes with the most wretched looking and poorly clad women and girls.

And there's a point in her favor. She didn't seek out the men. She sought out the women and girls.

The more I saw of her, the more thoroughly I was convinced that as far as I was concerned, she was my choice, though I was still asking the Lord constantly to take everything into his hands. I had noticed a silver haired lady with her, evidently her mother. One day early in the mission, this lady gave me an invitation to spend my rest day at her home.

I accepted and after she had gone, I turned to someone and asked who this lady was. Why that is Mrs. Richard Cadbury, I was told. This was a surprise as I had already visited the home of some of her

relatives.

It was not until the last rest day of the mission that I, with several others of the mission staff, was entertained at Ofcom. That was the name of this lady's home. Strangely enough, and quite unknown to each other until afterwards, my future wife and I were praying earnestly on that same Friday night for the Lord's guidance in this matter.

Each of us had a hard battle to fight with our own self-will, but each finally surrendered to the Lord to have or not to have as he should will. It was not until two days after the mission had closed that I spoke a word to Ms. Cadbury about this. And then, while it was all settled, in a few minutes, we were on our knees almost as soon as I had spoken to her, thanking the Lord for bringing us together and for the wonderful joy which we took as a gift direct from him.

Now, to you that is unimaginable, but it's the way most of the world has operated through practically all of human history. Now, mind you, in most of human history, there has been a third party. Well, there was a third party in a sense here.

God saw to it that he got a proper introduction to this lady, but the Bible talks about arranged marriages, doesn't it? It doesn't talk about anything else. There isn't such a thing as the do-it-yourself kind of marriage. Now, I am not naive and sanguine enough to think that we can go back to arranged marriages, necessarily, although I just saw on the television the other day a woman being interviewed who runs a marriage, and for a very fancy sum, she does arrange marriages.

And the singles business, which is booming, is one approach to that. I'm not suggesting any of that, but what I do want to point out, as principles illustrated by this story, are the following eight principles. The first is the essential, and I don't want to run it into the ground, but I've been saying it 50 times already.

Surrender to the will of God. Do you want to be holy? Do you want his rule in your life? And so, Charles Alexander said, we're both willing to have or not to have. Now, there's nothing wrong with having a desire.

There's nothing wrong with that. But your desire is to be surrendered and say, Lord, it's your will I want. So having had his own list for all these years, he now says, Lord, I'll take your list of qualifications.

Secondly, his faithful performance of the duties that God had given him. He was not distracted, so as to be unable to carry on his normal work. And that is a crucial point of finding guidance of God.

It's almost always through the faithful performance of duty. Do what you're paid to do first. Do what other people need you to do second.

Do what you want to do, if you have time for that, last. But obviously, the will of God is that you should do what you're paid to do. And as I always say to students, if you're a student, the will of God for you is to study and to quit cheating and to quit plagiarizing and to get your papers in on time.

That's what a holy student does. The third thing, expectancy that God will guide you. Some of you don't believe that.

He will. He's promised. The Lord is my shepherd.

He leads me in paths of righteousness, not for Elizabeth Elliot's namesake, but for his namesake. Number four, watchfulness as to that guidance. Expect him to guide you and then keep your eyes open.

Number five, setting character as a priority. What did he know about this woman's character? They'd never had a date. They'd never had a conversation.

There was something undoubtedly, I'm guessing here, but I would, I have no doubt in my mind that she was feminine. There was something womanly about her. There was something modest, which is appropriate to femininity.

She sat there on a platform undoubtedly quietly, and he watched what she did after the meeting was over. She didn't rush out. She went and talked with some of the most wretched looking women.

Number six, a new commitment of natural feelings. Having now been attracted to one specific person, although he'd been wanting for seven years to find a wife, now here was a person, a person that he was attracted to. So a new commitment of his natural feelings.

Number seven, no dating, but a frank confession of love in his first conversation. And nowadays people say, well, how can you know you'd love somebody unless you've known him for two years or three years or unless you've dated for a long time? What has it got to do with God's direction? And number eight, the recognition of God's gift. He says, we were on our knees.

It was all settled in a moment's thanking the Lord for his gift. Now that's just one man's experience, but again, I want to take you back to this book, Genesis 24, the story of Abraham sending out a servant to find a wife for his son, Isaac. Can't get these pages in this particular Bible.

Okay. So the servant did his job, asked, what if the woman is unwilling to come? Must I take your son back? In that event, must I take your son back to the land from which he came? And Abraham gives him instructions as to what to do and tells the servant, he will send his angel before you. Abraham's faith in God was, since this was the customary procedure, that he could expect God to work through that.

God will send an angel before you. And from there, you shall take a wife for my son. If the woman is unwilling to come with you, then you will be released from your oath.

He wasn't trying to predict exactly how it was going to work, but this is a logical, sensible way to go about it. So the servant did the next logical thing culturally, which was to take a very elaborate gift, 10 camels and all kinds of gifts and set out for the place that Abraham had directed him toward. And towards evening, the time when the women came to draw water, he made the camels kneel.

The need of his camels and the logical place where women could be observed fit together in God's plan. He went to the logical place and he prayed. The first thing he did was pray.

Oh, Lord, God of my master, Abraham, give me good fortune this day. Keep faith with my master, Abraham. Here I stand by the spring and the women in the city are coming out to draw water.

Let it be like this. And this is a very interesting way of getting God's guidance. I shall say to a girl, please lower your jar so that I may drink.

And if she answers, drink and I will water your camels also, that will be the girl. It would be some girl that would volunteer to water 10 camels, I would think. Does anybody here know how much a camel drinks? I don't have any idea, but it must be many, many gallons.

So can you imagine drawing the water from the well, putting it, pouring it into her jar, putting the jar on her shoulder, taking it over, pouring it out for the camels? How many times was she going to have to do that? So he thought this is going to be a unique woman. If she does this, it will be a miracle. And then what did he do? Before he had finished praying silently.

So the principle is you pray first, you pray silently. He saw Rebecca coming out with her water jug. She was the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milka, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.

The girl was very beautiful. Nothing wrong with being attracted and drawn to a beautiful girl. And the scripture mentions it.

Why does the scripture mention that she was very beautiful? She was also a virgin. So she undoubtedly had some sign in her dress, her headdress or something that made him know that she was not a married woman. A virgin who had had no intercourse with a man.

She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again. Abraham's servant hurried to meet her. He didn't waste any time.

He said, give me a sip of water from your jar. Drink, sir, she answered and at once lowered her jar onto her hand to let him drink. When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, now I will draw water for your camels until they have had enough.

So she quickly emptied her jar. Another point that reveals character. She was polite to him.

She said, sir, she was energetic. She was a hard worker. She was fast, quick, quickly emptied her jar into the water trough, hurried again to the well to draw water and watered all the camels.

The man was doing what? It says in verse 21, watching quietly. Now see, to me this is the basic principle of what God wants a man to do. I have very different things to say to men than what I have to say to women on this business of moving toward marriage.

If you're in the category of hoping for marriage, then to you men I say, these are the principles and I will give you the eight that I gave you from Charles Alexander's story and you can see how beautifully they fit into the Bible story. Surrender to the will of God, performance of the duties that God has given you, expect and see that God will guide in the course of your duties. You don't have to travel around the world and smell every rose before you come back and pick the rose in your own garden.

Where your duties take you, where the will of God puts you, that is the context in which you can expect God to lead you to a wife, if it's God's will for you to have a wife. I don't mean necessarily in the office where you work or in the machine shop, but presumably you go to a church and here you are at a conference. All of these things are part of the context of the will of God.

So surrender to his will, performance of his duties, expect and see that he will guide you, watchfulness, the servant watched quietly and prayed silently. Setting character as a priority, a new commitment of natural feelings, no dating, but a frank confession of love. And I would just like to say, and don't go out of here and say Elizabeth Eliot says it's a sin to date, but I would like to say that if I had my way, you know, if I were arbitrating this whole show, which thank God I'm not, you can thank God I'm not, I would advise people if they came to me, I would just say, I don't think that dating makes any sense.

It has been a very poor method. The do-it-yourself method has its own statistics to prove that it is not God's way. I would say, teenagers can date in groups, I wouldn't want my daughter going out alone with a guy when she was a teenager.

If people must date at some time or other, then do it back then in groups when nobody is really seriously thinking about marriage. But by the time you reach the age of 21 at the latest, you are a man. Now I think you're a man when you're 13.

And the Jews have always looked upon that as the dividing line between childhood and adulthood. There was no such thing as teenage. In my day, there certainly is nothing that, in the Bible, about teenagers.

Teenagers are taught that they are expected to be unruly and undisciplined and wild, and they sow their wild oats, and they can get away with anything because everybody expects them to act like little devils, and they live up to their expectations. But the Bible teaches that there are two groups, children and adults. So at the very latest in our society, let's say you are an adult, fully responsible man by the time you're 21 years old, and if you're living with your parents, after that I would certainly hope that you're paying substantial rent and board, and if you're not, get out.

But when you reach that age, why not cool it, chill out, and just turn it over to God and say, Lord, it's going to be your way from here on in. I don't want to break a whole lot of hearts, and my files are bulging with the tragic stories of all the heartbreaks on the side of both men and women in the Christian world, in this century, because of this dangerous game they're playing. It's tragic, and it is unnecessary.

So, here are the scriptural principles. It's got to be a foundation of prayer, a foundation of a lifetime decision. It is going to be the will of God.

Nothing more, nothing less, and I'm going to nothing else. Now I want to tell you a story of an even more modern courtship. A young man that Lars and I know is a man of real prayer.

We see him sometimes down on the rocks in front of our house, we live on the ocean, and he goes down there with his Bible and his hymn book and he prays sometimes for hours. And we've talked to him about the possibility of getting married and he told us that he hadn't been a Christian more than I think he's been a Christian about seven years or something. And he said, I did not live a pure life.

And he said, I just want to do it God's way and only God's way now. So he began to pray specifically that God would lead him to his choice of a wife. And this man has not been dating at all.

So when he says to us, I pray about something, we know that this particular man is praying. And so he'd been praying that God would lead him to the right girl. Well he thought that God had done that and so he went immediately to that girl and he said she was not a girl I was attracted to at all.

But he said, I just felt that this was God's choice for me and he had what seemed very good reasons for thinking that she might be. So he went to her immediately, told her about his prayers, told her that he felt that she was the one that God wanted him to marry. And she said, no way.

And she went off to a foreign country. And so he took that as a final answer from God that he was mistaken, it was not God's way. But he continued to pray, Lord show me, show me your way.

Well it happened that this young man had to drive me to one of my speaking engagements. Lars normally does it and Lars was away. So on our drive, which was an hour and a half or so up to New Hampshire, he raised the question of how a man goes about finding a wife.

And he knew he was asking the wrong person if he didn't want to hear my opinions. And one of his questions was, do you think that it's possible that God would lead you to a woman that doesn't attract you particularly? And I said, yes, I think it's entirely possible. On the other hand, I would also say that to be attracted to a girl is not in itself wrong or sinful.

So I said, I have no idea. I didn't know it was in the back of this man's mind. I didn't know his story at all.

He was just asking me what I thought were generic questions. And the whole way up he kept plying me with questions about this. And then a few days later, he told me that he was taking a certain girl down to visit his parents for the weekend.

And I said, well this sounds serious. I mean a man doesn't take a girl to visit his parents unless he has some serious thoughts about her. Is that correct? And he said, well yes it is.

He said, in fact, what I didn't tell you in our conversation the other day, and he told me a lot of things, but he said what I didn't tell you was that I have already proposed to this girl. And then he told me, filled in all the details, he said in my prayers that God would lead me to a certain, to the right woman, he said God kept bringing this woman into my mind. And he said she was the last person that I would have thought of.

And he said again and again, in odd ways, God kept bringing this woman across my path. So he said when I prayed about it, he said I prayed that God would give me a clear answer. And he said I asked her to go to the beach, and I told her that I believed it was God's will for us to get married.

Would she marry me? And she said, I'll have to think about it. She didn't say no. She called him up two weeks later, and she said God has told me the same thing, yes.

Now to me that is a very thrilling story. I'm not saying that it's got to work that way for every one of you. But what I didn't know, and he's been filling me in since then on details, he said she heard you speak a year ago.

And he said she had been looking for a husband, and eager for one, just like all her friends. And she had made herself available in ways, in little obvious ways. He didn't mean in any immoral way, but just let it be known that she was out there, and hoping for marriage, and all that.

And she would not hesitate to make a move in a man's direction to take the initiation. Take the initiative, which I think is unscriptural. And he said she heard you speak, and he said it absolutely changed her view.

And she determined then that she would ask God for his will, and nothing else. And she would not date again. And she would pray, she prayed specifically that God would send her a man who had the faith to trust him, rather than his feelings.

And God brought these two people together, and they're getting married in January. This was only October when all this took place. The foundation is surrender.

The daily practice must be prayer. And life becomes much simpler. You know, who wants to get into this chaotic, potentially heartbreaking situation that is going on? And if we had an opportunity this morning to

hear testimonies, I'm sure we would hear story after story after story of broken hearts.

I get letters all the time from young women who tell me that they've met the most wonderful Christian man. He's the youth pastor in their church, or he's a missionary. You know, they've all got the spiritual credentials.

And he told me that he thought maybe we should date, and then he thought maybe the Lord might be bringing us together. And he wanted us to have a special relationship, and he didn't want me to date anybody else. And all these circuitous ways, which are so confusing to women, and so contrary to what I find in the Bible.

And anyway, all our friends thought it was a perfect match, and we got counseling, and we finally decided to get married. And the guy just fades into the woodwork, you know, just sort of disappears, and calls up the woman and says, well, I think I was mistaken. When both of them, and the counselors, and their friends felt that this was right.

Now, one of the things that I haven't mentioned here, which I think is extremely important, is counseling. And I do not mean professional counseling. I mean, go to the godly people in your life.

Spiritual fathers or mothers. If your own parents are your spiritual fathers and mothers, thank God that you have that kind of parents. Mine were.

And my parents prayed all our lives, probably from before we were born, that God would give us godly husbands and wives. And as we moved into the marriageable age, they began to pick out and to pray for specific people. And as far as I know, and I have not checked this out with all six of us, there are six in the family, but there are four of us who married the specific people that our parents picked out.

In fact, my father chose a very lovely woman for my brother Tom, but Tom was a teacher in England, and she was a missionary in Japan. And my father prayed for five years that Tom would marry Lovelace. And my father died at the end of those five years, and after he died, Tom married Lovelace.

Now by all means, go to the people who know how to pray, who know how to keep their mouths shut, and who know you, and say, I'm interested in this person. I'm speaking of either men or women. It's perfectly legitimate for you women to pray, but by all means, keep it to yourself.

Do not let it get back to that man by any way, shape, or form. And pray with your spiritual parents who know how to keep their mouths shut. I had a lovely spiritual mother when I was a student at Prairie Bible Institute in Canada.

I always called her Mom, Mom Cunningham. She was a lovely Scottish lady, and she took it upon herself to be a spiritual mother to me, and she prayed for me over Jim Elliott. I poured out my soul to her about how I'd fallen in love with this man in my senior year in college.

Now I was in Bible school, and I didn't think there was a chance he was ever going to marry me, but when I described him to her, she said, I'm going to pray that God will work out his will for you. So in the multitude of counselors, it says in Scripture, there is safety. You're playing a dangerous game.

Ask wise people for their advice. Ask wise people for their advice. Does this look to you like a sensible match? What do you think of the character of this person? If you know somebody who knows that person

well, you can inquire about their character.

But this I would say, I would limit to the men. You men have got the responsibility before God to be the initiators. We were never meant to go out looking for a husband.

The husband is to be the initiator. How do I know that? Now that's not purely an Elizabeth Elliott quirk. We're told that the bridegroom is Christ, and Christ loved us while we were yet sinners.

He wooed us. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world. He calls us.

He lays down his life for us. And this man whose story I've told you that we know, he had to lay down his life and take that risk. I mean, can you imagine taking a girl to the beach that you have never once dated, and within the first five minutes saying to her, I believe God wants us to be married.

Will you marry me? I mean, that takes guts. That takes masculinity. And masculinity is responsibility.

If you want to know the details of what I understand masculinity to mean, you can read about that in my book, *The Mark of a Man*. I've tried to go back to scriptures and help you men who have been so badly confused, thanks to the feminist movement, about what maleness means and what masculinity means in God's eyes. And I tried to do the same thing in my book on femininity, which is called *Let Me Be a Woman*.

That was my wedding present to my daughter, Valerie. My book, *The Mark of a Man*, is written to my nephew, Pete, since I don't have a son. It's written in a very informal style, a form of letters to Pete.

But I haven't got time to elaborate on how strongly I feel about the man being the initiator and the woman being the responder, but it is scriptural, and I think that my case is fairly clearly presented there. So, trust God to guide you. There's a wonderful old hymn, *If thou but suffer God to guide thee, and hope in him through all thy ways, he'll do thee good*.

What e'er betide thee and bear thee through the evil days, who trusts in God's unchanging love, builds on a rock that not can move. The second stanza says, Obey thou restless heart, be still, and wait in cheerful hope, content to do what e'er his blessed will, his all-consuming love, hath sent. God never yet forsook in need the soul that trusted him, indeed.

And after I had said more or less what I've said to you this morning, in a church, the youth pastor who was married got up and he said, Elizabeth Elliot doesn't need any testimony from me, but he said, I want to say amen to everything that she said, because he said, I had made such a mess of my life and the lives of young women that I had gone with, by the time I was 22 years old, that I decided I was going to quit dating and start praying. And he said, I prayed for seven years. And he said, I did not do any dating, and God led me when I was 29 to the woman who is now my wife.

I trust that some of the things that I made as clear as I can this morning will have found the good ground, that the seed may spring up, and that there may be a reduction of the confusion and the heartbreaks, and that you men will before God discover his will for you. And for you women, wait on the Lord, and he shall strengthen thine heart. It doesn't say, wait on a husband.

It says, wait on the Lord. Marriage might be his will for you, and it might not. Do you want the rule of God in your life? God bless you.

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