

Principles of Courtship

by Paul Washer

To navigate the complexities of courtship, we must prioritize a holistic approach to knowing God's will, cultivate a relationship with our parents, and seek to follow biblical principles.

Duration: 1:01:01

Scripture: Judges 17:6, Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 29:18, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:1-2

Topics: "Courtship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of courtship and marriage according to the principles found in the Bible. He highlights the need for young people to be regenerated and conformed to the image of Christ before entering into a relationship. The speaker encourages individuals to submit every aspect of their lives to scripture and to strive for a marriage that brings glory to God. He also acknowledges the challenges of navigating courtship in a culture that is unfamiliar with biblical principles, cautioning against swinging too far in either direction and building systems that are not rooted in scripture.

Transcript

The National Center for Family Integrated Churches welcomes Paul Washer with the message Principles of Courtship. It's a great blessing to be here with you. We have some handouts.

We didn't expect this many people. I think we have about 200 handouts, so if you receive one, take one for your family. Feel free to make as many copies as you would like.

I want to start off by reading something that I wrote here for an introduction on the principles of courtship. This is very important to me. It is not sufficient, it is not enough to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, but we also must embrace it as sufficient.

To be thoroughly Christian, we must hold the Scriptures to be the rule for our doctrine and practice in every area of faith and life. This, of course, includes one of the greatest matters for every Christian, the choice of a spouse and the matter of courtship. Having recognized this truth, we are still not beyond danger.

Those who have rejected the worldly practice of recreational dating, the biblical practice of courtship, must always realize that when we walk in the path of truth, there are dangerous cliffs on every side. On the one side, we do not want to fall from the path through ignorance or rejection of God's truth. On the other side,

we do not want to go beyond the truths of Scripture and build a legalistic system of bondage based on personal inferences.

Let me say it this way. An old preacher that I greatly admire once said this, To be in falsehood, you can walk a thousand miles that way and a thousand miles that way and still be in falsehood. But to walk in the truth is like walking on the edge of a razor blade and you can fall off on either side.

And that has happened. You see, most of us, courtship, many of the things about the family, it's new. Not that it's never been taught in Christianity, but it's new to us, new to our culture, new to the contemporary church.

And because of that, we're grappling with Scripture to discover what is the will of God. And in cases like this, it's like swinging in a pendulum. We can swing away from the ungodly practices of our society, but instead of swinging to the center, we may swing too far and begin to build systems that truly are not in the Scriptures.

Now, I realized after I looked at my notes, I actually need about four classes to even get through them. But we're going to go as quickly as we can. Again, you can get the notes, you can make copies of them, you can use them as much as you would like.

But here's what I want to start off with. You know how people are always coming up to you, maybe you've done this yourself. You ask somebody, what is the will of God for my life? Or what is the will of God for a specific situation? Well, most people do not spend a great deal of time in the Word of God as a daily practice, saturating their life in the truths of Scripture.

But when they come to a point in their life when they need to know what God wants, they'll go to the book and start almost using it as though it were a magical book. You know, kind of throwing open the pages and pointing their finger down with their eyes closed to try to discover what is God's will. Well, Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, tells us that is wrong.

It tells us that in order to know the will of God, we must have a holistic approach. We must spend our entire life renewing our mind in the Word, saturating our lives in the Scriptures. And then, as events come in our lives in which we have to make decisions, God will make His will known to us.

And primarily through the truths of Scripture that we have come to understand. Now, that helps us whenever we're dealing with courtship. You take two immature, carnal people.

It doesn't matter how many principles you give them, and it doesn't matter even if they devote themselves to these principles, it's not going to work. So when we talk about courtship, you just can't, as parents, you just can't neglect your children for twenty years and then decide that you're going to throw some principles of courtship at them. And if you do that, it's going to lead them into a way of having a wonderful marriage.

That's not true. Courtship is just one tiny sprout on a much bigger tree. And that's what I want you to see.

Now, as I said, we're going to hurry through some things, so just bear with me. I want to look at several things. First of all, plowing a fertile ground with regard to courtship.

Now, I'm going to be speaking to parents here. We must be aware of our present reality as a people. The age in which we live.

I want to read a text to you that pretty much reveals where we are. Judges 17, 6. In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Now, how does this apply to our culture? We don't have kings. Well, king is an authority. And if we substitute the word of authority, it begins to make sense in our lives.

In those days there was no authority in Israel. There was no rock solid authority, and therefore everyone did what was right in their own eyes. One of the first things that captured me about this conference that's been going on for a few years was when I was asked to speak at the Sufficiency of Scripture conference.

And that is so very important. You see, people have argued for years with regard to the inerrancy of Scripture. But what I want you to know is, even if you believe that Scripture is inerrant, you've only fought half the battle, and if you don't win the next part of that battle, none of it matters.

You see, it doesn't matter if you say the Bible is infallible. The next question will be what tells me your true opinion about God's Word. Do you believe the Bible is sufficient? And so when we come to look at ourselves, our church, our culture, ourselves as individuals, we have to ask this question.

Are we willing to submit to an authority? Not so much an ecclesiastical authority, some popish person dictating the will of God to us, but are we willing to submit to the Holy Spirit as He reveals the truths of Scripture to us? You must base your entire life upon Scripture. In Hosea 4.6 it says, My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. Young people, listen to me.

You want some principles of courtship so that you can have a wonderful marriage. Without the full counsel of God's Word, these principles of courtship that are found in these study notes aren't going to matter. You must be regenerated.

You must be conformed to the image of Christ, and you must realize that you must take every aspect of your life and submit it to Scripture. Now, I want us to realize also that we must be convinced that the entirety of our life must abound to the glory of God. I'm in a lot of situations today where people are talking about Reformation, Reformation.

And I'm kind of the thorn in their heel. Because so many people think today that the Reformation is about soteriology. That, well, we get soteriology right and we have a Reformation.

No. Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, is the beginning of that Reformation. A high view of God is the beginning of that Reformation.

But you don't have a Reformation unless these truths trickle down and affect every part of our lives. Young person, listen to me. Two things have been taught so far in my rambling.

First of all, you must live every moment of your life and every aspect of your life must be given to the glory of God. Now, if you say, Amen, that's wonderful, it means nothing unless you also believe that the only way you can live to the glory of God is to study God's will revealed in Scripture and seek to submit every aspect of your life to it. I will tell you this.

A person, a young person who will commit himself or herself to these two truths will do better. Even if they know nothing about courtship, they will do better than the person who knows everything about courtship, but is not conformed to the image of Christ and is not living primarily for His glory. So you see, it's a heart

thing.

Young person, have you come to the opinion that every aspect of your life must be submitted to Christ and that the only way to do that is through your knowledge of Scripture? Now, another thing that I want to talk about here. Whenever we're talking about courtship, we're talking about two sides of a coin. One side of the coin is, of course, the young people who are involved in courtship.

But the other side of the coin is the parents. Courtship does not exist unless you have two young people who are thinking about marriage. And courtship cannot exist unless you have some godly parents.

And if not godly parents, then godly elders, godly authorities who can take the place of neglectful parents. So I want to talk for just a minute to the parents. There's nothing I hate more than to see a father who has invested nothing in his daughter.

And then when she is 16 or 17 and she goes out on her first date, he demonstrates what a caring father he is by answering the door with a shotgun. He is nothing but a brute beast. A neglectful animal who has not done the will of God.

He's neglected his child and now he's going to show what a man he is by standing in the door with a gun. It's the same way in courtship. You see, if you just say, I'm going to teach this to my child, it's no good.

You need to take that child, and if possible, from the moment that child is born, and you must teach that child the Scriptures, all the Scriptures about everything in life, particularly the Gospel and character and integrity. And then when that child comes of age, when you begin to speak about the things of courtship, you have some fertile ground to work with. Parents must strive to know the Scriptures.

Proverbs 29, 18, where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law. Parents, from the very beginning of the child's life, from the very beginning of your new life in Christ, you must dedicate yourselves to knowing God's law, to knowing God's Gospel, to knowing His character, His attributes, His works, His will for our lives. And this must permeate your home.

I used to have a political science professor who would always tell us this, a stampede at dusk does not atone for a wasted day. Teaching courtship at the very time your child is coming close to leaving your home is not going to make up for all the years and years and years that you have not taught your child and you have not been an example to your child. Look at what Paul says.

Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. Can you say that, Father? Can you say that, Mother? Can you look in your child's eyes and say, imitate me in this, just as I am imitating Christ. Now, of course, all of us have our failures and all of us have our weak spots, but this is a necessity.

This is not just for super-spiritual people within the congregation. This is for every one of God's people. And this is one of the fundamental truths of family, of biblical family, that I am teaching the Scriptures to my children and I am being an example of the Scriptures to my children, and that when I fail in that example, I go to my children and I ask them to forgive me.

Building a fertile ground. In Matthew 23, we have just the opposite. We have a negative example of this.

The scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus said, have seated themselves in the chair of Moses. Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe. But do not do according to their deeds, for they say things and do not

do them.

What a warning is this to parents. What an incredible warning. Young people, it teaches you that you need to honor the authority of your parents.

Parents, it teaches you that to possess such authority is a terrifying thing. Children, listen to them when they tell you the Scriptures. Parents, be terrified to know that to tell your children the Scriptures and not to live out the Scriptures before them is to heap judgment upon yourself.

Parents must strive to be biblical examples. They must strive to teach their children. They must lay a foundation year after year after year after year so that when this idea of courtship comes up, there is fertile ground.

There is a foundation. Just as a side note, just recently I heard a person speaking, a secular person, and they said that science has proven that for anyone to become an expert in anything, it takes 10,000 hours of study, training, practice. Parents, I don't know how accurate those numbers are, but I have found it helpful in my own life to say, I've got 18 years maybe with these children.

What a goal it would be to invest 10,000 hours in their biblical training. That when they leave my home, they're an expert. Because even if my sons go through and understand and do everything that courtship says you should do, and they find a good mate, and they've gone through without committing immorality, they go to the church pure on their wedding day.

If I have not taught him, if I have not made him an expert in the Word, then I can tell you, after he says, I do, and she says, I do, where do they go from there? They have nothing. An immature boy who followed some rules. Our goal as parents is to create mature experts in the things of God so that after the marriage they continue on.

That they don't even need our systems and our plans and our books. Why? Because they have such integrity, such Christ-likeness, such wisdom in the Scriptures. Now, having said that, I want to go on and like I said, I am skipping a lot of material here.

I've talked to the parents. I want to talk for just a moment to the young people about something that's very important before we talk about courtship. And it is this.

You must be convinced of your parents' role in your life. You must be convinced that God has created an order that is appropriate to follow, that is beneficial to follow. He has given you parents and you should take what He has given you.

And you should seek to obey Him in this matter, that you can draw wisdom from them, that you can submit to them. And even for some of you who have unbelieving parents, there is still a need to honor them. Let me give you an example.

I desired to marry my wife. She was in Peru. I was in Peru.

Her parents lived in Paraguay. Her father, an unbeliever. He said no.

And I took his word as the will of God. But I also was given assurance that God would fight for me. If I submitted, if I honored him, if I respected his decision, God would fight for me.

Six months later, he made it known to another relative. This is what he said. She can marry him.

I mean, she said, I still cannot believe that that man submitted to me. I don't think there would be another man in the world who would do that. She can marry him because of his submission to me.

He honored me. He did not have to. And I don't even understand why he did it.

But he did it. You see, young people, God has given you parents. And if He really is an all-sovereign God, then He can handle your parents.

And He can handle everything else in your life. Children, you must be convinced that God has ordained that you have parents. And He desires to speak through those parents and to lead you through your parents.

Now, there can be times, there can be exceptions when you must follow conscience. There can be times when you must obey God rather than men. But in the general context of general living, I want you to be convinced that you must cultivate a relationship with your father and your mother.

You must begin that cultivation of that relationship from the very beginning. If you're a boy here or a little girl here right now, you're 8, 9, 10 years old, I'm not only telling your parents that they ought to cultivate a relationship with you, I'm telling you that you ought to cultivate a relationship with your parents. A friendship.

That you might know your parents intimately. That you might know them as parents. That you might honor them as such.

That you might know them as friends. That you might know the way they think. That parents might know your mind and your heart so that when you come to a time when great decisions in your life have to be made, there is such a relationship between both of you, such a like-mindedness, that you as children will be nothing more and nothing less than a mere reflection of the will of God in the heart and minds of your parents.

Develop this relationship. Again, I'm going back, I know I sound like a broken record, but I'm going back to this. You can't neglect an entire life and then at the end throw a few biblical principles their way and hope that everything will turn out alright.

You can't neglect nurturing a relationship as a father, as a son, as a daughter, as a mother, and then at the end try to come together and agree about something in your lives. You must begin at the beginning. Parents, fathers, especially fathers, listen to me.

If I asked right now how many of you are homeschooled dads, you'd probably all raise your hand. But then if I asked you, well, how many of you are just dads married to a homeschool mom? How many of you dads are really, really cultivating relationships with your children? And mothers, I know that homeschooling is so difficult, so tough, but how many times are you overlooking the real important things in order to just get through the curriculum? This is not just about getting them through curriculum or memorizing a certain number of Scriptures. It is about cultivating a relationship with them so that when courtship time comes, you walk through it as friends.

You walk through it united in heart. You walk through it like-minded. So very important.

Now that we've laid that down, let's talk about courtship. I want to talk for just a moment about the heresy of recreational dating. It's a heresy.

And not only is it a heresy, it's a phenomenon. I think it's not really addressed in Scripture because it's a modern thing. It's almost beyond the mind of anyone, even in history, that we could practice the things we are practicing today.

Young men who don't really know me will sometimes come up to me after I've preached, and they'll say, Brother Washer, I've got a question. I'm thinking about dating this girl. And I say, well, how old are you? They say, 15.

I said, well, first of all, I'd like to say I am very, very proud of you. And they'll, you know, stick out their chest. Well, thank you, Mr. Washer.

I said, yes, I'm just amazed that a man as young as you, of your age, would have already determined a profession in life, already living independently of his parents, you know, paying for your car and your home and your insurance, and that at age 15 you desire to marry and you found a girl that you're prepared to marry very soon. I am so proud of you. As a matter of fact, I'm going up right now to preach again.

Could I take you with me and just share this with everyone? And I mean, they think they've just met an alien from outer space. They go, no, that's not what I meant. That's not what I meant.

I mean, that's not what I meant at all. And I said, what did you mean? Well, I want to go out with her. Why? That's where my face changes.

And they know they've done something terribly wrong. I go, why? Let me see. You don't want to marry her? What do you want? You see, that's just what it comes down to.

I'll have even men that will walk into my office and, you know, they have that look. You know, they're 23 years old and they're in love. I have a two-by-four that I finally crafted from oak.

I smack them over the head with it before I even begin to counsel them. They say, you know, I'm just in love. I said, with who? Well, I'm in love with so-and-so.

Well, that's absolutely wonderful. Why do you want to marry her? Well, I want to marry her because she's beautiful and because when I'm with her, boy, I just feel so good and we can talk and we can communicate and all these things. And I look at them and say, what's going to happen when someone else comes along that's more beautiful than she is? Are you going to leave her? What happens when you can't communicate, but you can communicate with the lady at the bank a lot better than you can with her? Are you going to leave her? And I start going through all these different things and in the end, the young man discovers the only reason he's in this is to meet his self-centered, selfish desires.

And that's what recreational dating is about. It's about a young man who has no business whatsoever even thinking about these things, wanting to be with someone of the opposite sex and yet unwilling to make the commitments that God requires. Now, how has this come about? First of all, people do recreational dating.

They go out for fun. Why? To satisfy the lust of the flesh. That's why they do it.

And that's why we have such horrendous results from recreational dating. What's another reason? To satisfy heartfelt passions, maybe even biblical passions. There comes a time when a young man notices that a girl is something to admire, something beautiful, something someone to fellowship with.

And maybe they have great desires to do that, but they're going about it in a manner that is totally contrary to the Scriptures. What's another reason why they do this? A consumer mentality. You've got to kiss a lot of frogs, they say, before you find your prince.

The only problem is those frogs can leave a lot of slimy things all over you. You don't want to do that. But that's the way the world does.

I have heard so many even supposed Christian mothers and fathers that have said this. I'm really upset because this is the first young man that my daughter has really been with, and I think she's just making a hasty decision. She needs to get out there and meet other people before she makes a decision.

That's wrong. And then, one of the greatest reasons is ignorance. My friend Ray Comfort just came out with a film about talking to people about abortion.

It's called 180. And he takes secular people and just gets them to think just a little. And within a few minutes, most of them are saying, I never thought about it that way, and now I am against abortion.

Well, it's the same thing. If you just sit down and think through some of these ungodly practices of recreational dating, you will see that ignorance really is destroying God's people. Now, I want to look at something about the time of courtship.

When we talk about courtship, I want to talk about the time of it. The timing of courtship is often overlooked. When should a young man or a young woman begin to enter into a courtship relationship? Well, first of all, I started teaching my boys about marriage when they were five, six years old.

Now, what do I mean by that? I did not teach them about sex or physical intimacy. Still do not. Because I need to protect their innocence.

They should be thinking about other things like building tree houses and killing deer and fighting dragons and all the things that boys do. But here's what they do know. They do know that their father is married.

They do know that it is a great privilege. They do know that when the subject of marriage comes up, even the subject of their future marriage, they should not laugh. Snicker.

Take it lightly. Because that's proverbial foolishness. That it's a thing they should be praying about, a thing they should desire, a thing that will happen.

I'm preparing them now. They just know it is a noble thing. It is not something to be done after they have sown their wild oats.

It's not something to be done after they've lived their life and had a good time. It is something to desire. It is something to prepare for.

Now, there comes a time in every young person's life, every young boy, every young girl, when they awake to the fact that there is the opposite sex. Now, that happens now at five and six and seven years of age. I hear of little girls who are eight who are trying to go out with little boys and all kinds of things.

It's absolutely, it's not just ludicrous, it's absolutely disgusting. That their innocence has been taken from them. But there does come a time, and I don't know when that time is, but there comes a time, it can be ten, twelve, thirteen, who knows? When they begin to realize that the opposite sex is attractive and desirable.

Now, what does that mean when that happens? Should we suppress it? Absolutely not. Well, what should we do? Just keep this in mind. When a young person awakens to the fact that the opposite sex is desirable, it is not a sign from God that they need to participate.

It is a sign from God that they need to prepare. And parents, you can use this as a candle, as a carrot put in front of the donkey to keep it going down the road just a little bit faster. When a young man, let's say, he's eleven, twelve, thirteen years old, he's been taught correctly by his father, he comes to understand that there is an opposite sex, he comes to understand what it is all about, and he says honestly, because he's had these conversations with his father, Father, I want to marry.

Then you can use that and say, wonderful, absolutely wonderful. But you know what that means? You must become a man. And since you must become a man, you and I must begin to work even harder than ever.

We must study the Scriptures more than ever. We must work on even your physical training more than ever. We must be talking about a profession more than ever.

We must be preparing, preparing, preparing. If you want that, this is the carrot, this is the goal. I'm not going to hand it over to you.

You're going to have to work. The Olympic athlete, he wants that gold medal around his neck. You want a bride on your arm? Get to training, and I will help you.

The same thing with a little girl. She comes to understand this. She wants to be married.

She needs to be able to answer some questions. Can you manage a home? Well, no, Mom. Well, then you need to learn to manage this one.

I'm going to teach you. Let me give you an example. I was at a missions conference a few months ago in Minneapolis, and I had countless young people come up to me, having heard all these sermons that were preached, and they were going, I'm going right now as a missionary.

I want to be a missionary. I'm passionate about missions. And I asked each and every one of them this question.

I'm going to give you five minutes. Explain to me penal substitution. Almost all of them said, Sir, I don't even know what you're talking about.

And I said, you cannot go to the mission field. If you cannot explain some of the fundamental doctrines of the cross, you have no business on the mission field. Here's a good question.

Mom, Dad, I want to get married. Okay, show me your credentials. Show me what you can do, young man.

Prove yourself to me. And fathers, this is important. Your son not only has to prove himself to his future father-in-law, he ought to be proving himself to you.

Because before he ever goes to that other man, he ought to be coming to you for the blessing. But here's another thing, Father, and this is why I wish I had about 100 hours to teach on this. Father, listen to me.

You demand great things from your son, but if you do not invest in your son a great amount of time, costly time, then don't demand things from him. And what I'm trying to tell you here is that when someone is awakened to the opposite sex, it means more than ever. Not that they're supposed to participate, but they are to prepare.

Now, I want to talk just for a second about the lie of adolescence. Some of you young men, if I walked up to you, let's say you're 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and I walk up to you and you're kind of standing at a distance and I look at one of you and I say, boy, come here. A lot of you are going to get mad.

Who are you calling boy? Well, now, here's my question. Well, what do I call you? Do I call you sir? Do I call you man? Are you a man? And see, even here, so many young men have got it to their head, I'm not a boy, don't call me boy. But then you ask them, well, are you a man? Well, no, I'm not a man.

Well, then what are you? Well, I'm an adolescent. I'm a teenager. I'm sorry, that category really doesn't exist.

What adolescence is, is simply this. It is a lie of the devil. And this is what it does.

It enables little boys to demand the privileges of men without the willingness or ability to assume the responsibilities of them. I'm 16. I want to go out on a date.

Yes, but can you lead a woman spiritually? Can you care for her economically? Can you protect her physically? No, then you cannot. Because it doesn't say an adolescent shall leave his father and mother. It says a man shall leave his father and mother.

And it doesn't mean that he will come home after the date is finished. You see, these are things that I want you to see. We live in a society of entitlement.

I'm 14. It's time for me to spread my wings. No, not unless you've earned them.

I have these desires. Don't quench those desires. Those desires are wonderful.

But those desires are calling you, son, to prepare, not to participate. And that's what we need to see again and again. I'm going back to this one thing.

In order for courtship to work, it requires years and years and years of plowing and sowing and nurturing. And fathers, that's our responsibility. Even if it's our daughter we're talking about.

It's our responsibility. Men, don't just throw courtship on the end of their life with you. From the very beginning, you must work with them.

That when you come to talk to them about courtship, it is just an extension of what you've already been doing. Now, I'm going to jump over some things here. Young men, I want to talk to you for just a second about a few signs of male maturity.

Some things that you need to be looking for. First of all, when you talk about courtship, young man, ask yourself this question. Do you dwell with God? Do you manifest unaided devotion to God? That means that you need no one prodding you.

You need no father telling you to read your Bible. You need no mother telling you to memorize Scripture or to say your prayers. Unaided devotion to God.

Another thing that I want to ask you is do you have moral fortitude? Can you stand as a man of character, as a man of Christ, can you do that without the aid of mother and father? I want you to realize something, young man. If you're struggling right now to have a daily devotion, if you're struggling to walk a godly life while you're still living at home with godly parents, then you should not be thinking about marriage. Listen to this.

Jeremiah 12.5 If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in the land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan? Young man, if you cannot walk with Christ now when you're being supervised by godly parents, how will you lead a family? Young lady, the same thing for you. You're talking about you want to be married. You're in love with courtship.

Maybe that's your problem. You're in love with being in love. But are you prepared? Can you do these things when you're out on your own? Now, another thing that I want to talk about, especially with a young lady.

Young lady, I do a lot of things in this world. My wife is thinking about writing Marriage to a Difficult Man Vol. 2. Except she wants to put in there Marriage to a Really, Really, Really Difficult Man Vol.

2. Alright, I leave in two days for the Middle East. I will not be coming back for 15 days if I come back at all. I am going there to do some things that are going to be very, very important for our ministry and for the advancement of the gospel.

I'm going there. When I leave, I know my children are cared for. I know my children are taught.

And not only that, I know my home is managed. I know that. I know the finances, the insurance, everything is taken care of.

My wife is a corporate executive in our home. She manages everything so that I can do what I do with heart cry and preaching and other things. All the bills are paid.

Insurance things are dealt with. She manages the home. Can you do that? She cooks wonderfully.

Can you do that? I mean, you're talking about courtship. Maybe you've just read too many of these Christian books about Quakers falling in love. Can you really manage a home? Sometimes I think we should almost look at marriage as do I really want to hire this person? A young man almost needs to do I really want to hire this woman to take care of my corporation? And a woman maybe needs to think do I really want this guy leading? Do I want to work in a corporation where this guy is leading? I mean, it's a resume.

What is your resume? And it's not cutesy or anything else if you just say, well, I really love him. I'm as dumb as a brick, but I love him. And all you need is love.

Didn't Paul McCartney say that? Or John Lennon or somebody? No. You are building an enterprise, a block, a foundational block of society. I mean, that's why society is falling apart.

Because the families become a sitcom. Young person, listen to me. Prepare.

Young men, prepare. Work at this hard. Think about marriages as this goal out there.

And let's say you're thinking, man, five, six years of just I'm going to sit down with my father. I'm going to draw out a strategy. I'm going to be purposeful.

I'm going to intend to become what I need to become for the glory of God in the context of marriage. I'm going to work at it. I'm going to go around, ask people, what needs to change in my character? How do I need to do this? How do I need to do that? And learn.

And grow. And the same for you young women. Now, again, all of this is in the notes.

There's a thing on Proverbs also, on the Proverbs 31 woman. I want to just look with the time we have at a few principles of courtship. First of all, in courtship the relationship is initiated by the young man.

That from the very beginning tells you a great deal about the way marriage is supposed to be. The courtship is initiated by the young man. It says a man shall leave his father and mother.

And also everywhere in Scripture where you see a young woman pursuing, taking the initiative to pursue a young man, she is considered an immoral woman. Young ladies, this is where you trust in the sovereignty of God. This is where you trust in prayer.

This is where you trust that God can override and overcome anything that you think might stand between you and marriage. And as my wife always tells young ladies, if God has not brought that person, it's because at that moment He wants to make you more like Christ or wants to use you in a specific task. And you need to be content with the will of God.

Now, the relationship is initiated by the young man. The young man should prayerfully evaluate his own motives as to why he is attracted to a certain young lady. And to use the word attract is fine.

He's interested. He sees a young lady. She seems to stand out to him.

But he needs to examine his motives, as it says in Lamentations, let us examine and probe our ways and let us return to the Lord. Young man, you need to be very, very careful because you can be deceived here. Fathers, this is why it's so extremely important from the time your child understands language, you need to be taking your son through the book of Proverbs over and over and over and over because in Proverbs it's being pointed out to the young man over and over what type of woman he should desire and what type of woman he should run from.

The other day we were studying in the book of Proverbs and I told my son, you see, look, Ian, Evan, look at this. Tastes like honey she does. But when she goes through, she becomes bitter as gall.

When she's through with you, your life will be nothing and in your mouth and in your stomach will be poison and bitterness. And in order to prove the point, I got some really good cod liver oil. Now I'm not really cruel, it was a small spoonful, about this big, and I gave each one of them a drink.

I said that's what this passage means, except worse. This taste will go away in a few minutes, or days at least. But that woman will not.

She will scar you for life. You see, fathers, you need to be telling them this now. Proverbs 31.

How come Proverbs 31 is always taught in women's conferences and women's meetings? It wasn't written to women. Did you realize that? Proverbs 31 was written to a young man to know what kind of woman to look for. And fathers, this is something you should be doing from the time that they're young.

What kind of young women to look for. Now, here's some questions. Are you attracted to biblical beauty or sensuality? Sensuality is death.

It's death. Sensuality most manifests itself in the way a person carries themselves, the way they talk, and the way they dress. My wife has a good little illustration.

She always uses it for girls, and it's this. Your face is the fountain from which the glory of God should be shining. Therefore, if your clothing is a frame for your face, it's of the Lord.

If it draws attention to your face, it is of the Lord. But if your clothing draws attention to your body, it's sensual and God hates it. But understand this.

I know women that can walk in this building that have a Victorian dress on and everything else, but they cannot conceal their sensual heart with the clothes they have on. So it's both. Young men, avoid sensuality like the plague.

Not only that, young man, listen to me here. Are you attracted to virtue or are you attracted to personality? A whimsical personality will only go so far but virtue will go on into glory. Now, what should a young man do when he realizes he's attracted to a young woman? He should go to his father and seek out godly counsel.

What else should he do? I recommend also that he or he and his father also go to the elders and a multitude of counselors. And what is his basic question? Father, am I a man? A good standard for marriage is the standard for elders in 1 Timothy 3. You see, what you need to understand, that passage has been twisted terribly. We think, oh, that's the standard an elder needs to live up to and none of us have to worry about it.

No, that's not what that's teaching. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is just teaching what a mature man looks like. And if you're going to be an elder, you need to be a mature man.

One thing to do, young person, young man, is to go to 1 Timothy 3 and go with your father and go with the elders and say, is this me? Am I ready to marriage? If they say no, then take that and say, alright then, I want to be married. You say no. Train me.

Tell me what I need to do. It goes on, a young man should then seek permission from the authorities in the young woman's life. Young man, if you send your friend to talk to her friend and to see whether or not she likes you, then I want you to take a mission trip with me into the jungle where I am going to leave you.

That is horrible. It's horrible. You go to her father.

You go to her father. Now, the young woman's father, I believe, from Exodus 22, 16 and 17 in Numbers 30, 3 through 5 has the right to deny permission immediately. I think that he can look down at this young man and say, there is no biblical way.

There is just no biblical way. Now, he shouldn't shut that young man off because Christ never shuts someone off. But he should say, young man, you do not qualify.

In this matter, I don't even need to talk to my daughter. You are not a biblical man. Now, the father needs to be merciful.

He needs to realize that he was young once and that even though he's older, he still has flaws. But a young man comes who's not even converted or a young, immature believer that shows little evidence of maturity? No. No.

But let's say that the father approves. What should he do? Should he put his arm around the young man and say, young man, man, I think you're great. I'm going to be on your side in this.

Absolutely not. He should remain totally and completely neutral. He should look at that young man and he should say this, young man, I'm going to make this a matter of prayer.

Now notice, I'm talking about practical things. The man did not say, I'm going to go talk to my daughter. He says, young man, I'm going to make this a matter of prayer.

Come back with me in two weeks, a month, whatever he says. And what does the father do? Let's say the father approves. He goes to his daughter and he says, honey, this young man has come.

He's asked to court you. And she says, no, daddy. No, no, no, no.

What should the father do? He should say, honey, please, just consider it. I want you to pray about it for a couple weeks. She prays about it for a couple weeks.

She comes back. She says, no, daddy, no. So the father goes back to the young man and what does he say? Well, I talked to my daughter and no, she's not interested.

Absolutely not. You see, it is my job to stand in the door. It is my job to protect my daughter.

If that young man's going to have a problem, he needs to have a problem with me. I do not need to bring my daughter into conflict with some man. So I'm going to tell him, I have discussed this matter with the appropriate people.

I have prayed about it. And I have made my decision. And the decision is no.

And if he says, well, what does your daughter say? That's already proof that my answer was correct. Now listen, I didn't make the decision there. I went out and talked to my daughter.

I was in favor of the guy. He seemed like a good guy. I know his parents, everything else.

But my daughter was not interested. When I come back, I deal with him. I don't bring my daughter into it.

I meet him at the door. Now let's say that I go to my daughter and I say, look, so and so has come and he wants to court you. My daughter starts running around the house singing the Hallelujah Chorus,

everything else.

What do I do? Again, I say, daughter, pray about it. I'm even going to ask her to probably pray about it much longer than the rejection. Because you can always change that rejection pretty quick.

It's the approval that's difficult to change. And I go to her. I talk to her mother.

I talk to her. I talk to the elders. Everyone seems to be going in that direction.

It seems wonderful. Then I go back and I say to the young man, yes. Now here's something I want to warn you about.

Now parents, you might not believe me. I know this is true. I've had to counsel too many young women who were almost to the point of almost just suicidal.

And that is this. Father, you go to your daughter and if you know she has not made a hasty decision, she's prayed about this and she really believes this is the young man. You go to her and say this.

And I don't care who comes against you. You're her father. You say, daughter, I believe that you've made a good decision based on prayer.

I believe that you're committed to this. And I praise God for that. But here's what I want you to know.

That if after a few weeks or a few months, you begin to have great doubts and you're afraid that this is not the person, but you feel like you cannot get out of this because you will disappoint too many people. Daughter, I don't want you to be coerced into a marriage like that. If you come to understand, I don't care how many people that supposedly are offended or anything else, if this is not what God really wants from you, if you are scared, if you feel like you've got to get out, if this is suffocating you, know this, your dad will stand beside you.

I do not want you coerced. We can all make mistakes. And if necessary, I will be the one who breaks your vow.

Men, take this serious. Now, a girl can get cold feet and so can a guy and we need to talk through that. But I have seen girls enter into a courtship relationship and feel like they would fail the families, the church, and everyone else and they were dirty and they would have a stigma on them for the rest of their life.

As the father, do not permit your daughter to suffer under that kind of bondage. Amen? Well, some of you. Amen.

Protect her. This is going to be one of your last great acts of being her protector. And you need to do that.

Now, if, and we're closing here, if everyone's in agreement, what should the parents do? I believe that the parents of both parties should come together and covenant together. Have an agreement together. They should sit down and discuss.

You say, well, what if the parents live in California and you live in Massachusetts? Get on a plane. This is that important. And what should you do? You should seek to build a relationship as in-laws.

You should be united in your purpose for Christ to be honored and this new marriage to be blessed. You should pray together and you should build parameters of protection. Parameters of protection.

And I wish I had time to go into that, but listen to me. Let me just give you one rule. Young person, I am commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel even if they kill me.

I am commanded in Ephesians 6 to do hand-to-hand combat with the devil and not back up. I am to resist him every step of the way. I am not to mock him.

I am not to take him lightly. I am not to open my mouth and scold him, but I am to resist him every step of the way in hand-to-hand combat. But when it comes to youthful lust, I'm told to run.

I had a young man come to me, a seminary student one time, and he was weeping. I knew something was wrong because he was a man's man. And he said, I can't take it any longer.

He says, I just can't take it. And I said, what's wrong, son? He said, I'm just, you know, I want to be godly. The girl I'm courting, she wants to be godly, but we come together, we get in the car, we drive out, we do things, and at times, even though we've made these commitments, we end up doing things we said we would never do, and then it adds to confusion and pain, and she's ashamed, and I'm not a leader, and I don't know what to do, and I said, well, what do your counselors at school tell you to do? He said, well, they tell me that, you know, this is a difficult time, transition period, I need to read my Bible, she needs to read her Bible, we need to pray.

I said, you go back to your counselors and tell them, at my request, just give them my name, and say, I would greatly appreciate it if they would find another profession, that they have no business leading young people astray. I said, young man, I said, you can't. You can't be godly enough to fight this.

Now, they need to be alone, but you can set up parameters. You can help this out, not just the parents, but elders, wise people in the congregation. Now, notice I said wise people in the congregation, because there will be people in the congregation who are snakes, who want to trespass against parental authority, and to give your children freedom that you're not comfortable with.

But with elders and others, we work together, that's what church is about. That's what community is about. We find ways to bless them, to allow them to sit, and to talk, and to get to know each other, and to form a relationship, but in a place that's not closed off, and where a man who's a very good shot can walk back and forth at different times with a large gun.

You see, but don't be crazy in this. Some of you will be crazy in this. You won't even give these young people time to be together at all, or to get to know each other.

And others of us will be too open in this. And that is why we work together and we pray, a unified force searching the Scriptures, to know how to guide this couple to marriage. Alright, I am so sorry I've gone through about a thousand pages in an hour, and probably just thrown out a bunch of incoherent thought.

But I hope it will help you some to understand at least how important this is. Let's pray. Father, I ask You, Lord, that You would use this.

Lord, the greatest of all, that our children would love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. And in that, they would find great protection. In Jesus' name.

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