

(Spiritual Guidelines for Courtship) Practical Courtship Issues

by Rick Leibee

Rick Leibee discusses practical guidelines for courtship, emphasizing biblical principles, the importance of surrender, and the balance between character and attraction.

Duration: 1:12:45

Scripture: Ruth 2:9, Proverbs 18:22, 1 Corinthians 7:1, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 14:4

Topics: "Christian Courtship", "Biblical Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the principles and indicators of God's work in young people's lives. He emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance in courtship and making decisions based on biblical principles. The speaker highlights the significance of the last month before the wedding in a courtship and the need to filter everything through the lens of the Word of God. He emphasizes that the Bible is not just a book of knowledge, but a tool to transform and change the way we think and live.

Transcript

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

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Hallelujah. We do thank God and praise God for His mercy, His help today. I do greet you in Jesus' name, the One who has called Himself the Bridegroom.

And He is preparing a place for you if you are His bride today. I don't want to miss that happy wedding day, do you? Amen. It's kind of a little bit hard to know where to start this morning after all we covered yesterday.

There's no way to review all those things. But maybe God took care of that through these testimonies, at least in many respects, if not all. Thank you, all of you young couples that shared, for opening up what in many ways is a bit of a private part of your life, I guess we could say, not normally made public, if we could say it that way.

And yet, hopefully this is not just public. Hopefully we're all in the family of God together. And so it's just family business.

It's just family matters that sometimes we need to share as a family. And just say out loud, yes, I did struggle with this. Or I had a blessing here.

Or God helped me in this way. And God answered my prayer here. And I had a victory there over a struggle.

And all those things that were shared this morning are very real, aren't they? Remember yesterday, one of the themes or one of the points I tried to make is there is a bit of flexibility. All courtships are not the same. And we don't have necessarily a system where it all has to go just a certain way or be done just a certain way.

And yet, one of the points I stressed yesterday is yet there are right, biblical, godly principles that we want to live by. And again, I think you heard some of those coming out in the testimonies today. Everything may not have been done the way you might have had it in your mind or some list you may have heard before.

And yet, did you notice the principles were guiding? Even in the struggles and even in the victories and all those things. The principles were there to bring both blessing and guidance and help. Whether it was from authorities or in our own hearts with God or biblical principles and all those things.

So I'm very blessed by that this morning. I believe God will use that to bless many for years to come. Hopefully, as the tapes have the opportunity to be used and given out in different situations.

Again, I just want to say to you young people that are here, I love you. We love you as a church. We're sharing these things both out of a burden but also a love for you.

Not at you but for you and with you. And I hope you sense that burden, sense that love. And can be not only challenged but encouraged in the way that we want you to go.

In the way that we believe God wants you to go. Because you are the future of the church. And we join with God in caring about these things.

Caring about the future of the church. So amen for that. Again, the things that I'm going to share today.

This is Sunday morning. It's not a time where we would normally have a message like this. And yet it fits as part of what we're doing for a weekend.

So if you're a visitor here, you're just kind of joining in an ongoing thing that we've been doing. And the message will therefore be a bit more of a practical message. A bit more of a message where we basically walk through some things and talk about some specific issues.

And it would be in some ways a bit more of a family room chat we could say. Or a fireside chat where we would talk over some of these principles. And make specific applications and specific situations as they

relate to us.

And so if as I go through this message you're thinking this isn't a Sunday morning message. You're right. It's not a Sunday morning message.

But it is a message that needs to be shared. And a message we as a ministry prayed about and decided, yes, okay, it's going to be Sunday morning. But we're just going to go right on and share these things because we think they're important.

So I pray you'd give me grace and bear with us as we go through these things. And again, I carefully share these things. I'm going to be even a bit more specific this morning about certain guidelines perhaps than I was over the last two messages.

And again, I beg that you would remember these are just guidelines. You know, we are not making a set of rules. We are sharing, again, principles and general guidelines that we believe are biblical and very, very important and true.

And we do believe we want to follow these, have these principles in our hearts to guide us and direct us. Even as you heard our brother Gary share, you know, he was tempted to kind of take things in his own hand. And yet in his heart he knew there was like that warning principle, wait a minute, this isn't going to be right.

And so that principle guided him. He thought of specific applications. Did you catch that? He almost reasoned in his mind, yeah, but she's older.

Yeah, but her father's not. I mean, he almost got around it in his reasonings. But that guiding principle of understanding authority was in his life.

And it wouldn't let him, even in his specific application, get around it. And of course, his testimony today is he's so glad that that was in his heart. And so that's the kind of situation we're talking about.

Sometimes you will be faced with things like that that don't fit a perfect formula of the way you think things are going to work out. But the principles are still there. The Word of God is still there to guide us and to give us both warnings and blessings.

I think I would like to begin this morning by reading a couple of verses that we read yesterday. And just making a few comments. Turn to the first verse we read yesterday morning was in Proverbs 18, verse 22.

Proverbs 18, verse 22. The Bible here says, Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord. Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord.

And then turn over into the New Testament to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 2. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 2. And here Paul says, For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. And as we talk about some of these verses and some of these principles, but again remembering as we shared yesterday, even though there is no perfect courtship story necessarily in the Bible that would encompass all the principles that we talked about yesterday, still what we do share comes from verses like this which are very sure and very true.

And we need to remember that the Bible is not a book of just information. It was not written as a book of good ideas or a book for knowledge. It is a book written and given to men to change men.

And to change the way you think. And to change the way you live. And if that's not how you look at the Bible, you're looking at it wrong.

We need to filter everything we do through the Bible. And we need to see through the lens of the Word of God this world. We need to see our own heart.

And we need to see relationships even as we heard about this morning. And so these verses may be simple verses in many ways. You may not think, well these are not that profound Brother Rick.

But these kind of verses and many others that give the principles that we're talking about are not just to give you a few good ideas. They're not to just increase a little bit of your knowledge. But they're in here to change men.

And to change the way you think and the way I think. Because many of us, the way we were raised, as Brother Gary shared and others, we weren't raised to think this way about courtship. We weren't raised to think this way about how to find a spouse.

We were just kind of left to our own and dating and this and that and all those things that we covered yesterday. And without realizing it, some of those things we drag into our Christian life and then try to reason through it with our thinking. And I guess what I'm asking you to do is remember, you need to change your thinking.

Sometimes part of the Christian life, we all want a heart change. But you also need to learn that the Bible does and can and will change the way you think. I think differently now about a lot of subjects than I did ten, twenty years ago.

Or twenty-two years specifically. Well, it'll be twenty-three years this fall that I was born again. There's things that I think now about certain subjects I never thought of before.

And there's things that I think exactly the opposite the way I used to think. It's not just a feeling, although feelings are important, but actually the way I see it and understand it and perceive it has changed based upon the Word of God changing the way I think. Because if I don't think differently, I'm not going to see things God's way.

I'm still going to bring my own human reasoning. And so, I'm just begging you this morning, and even those of you that were here yesterday, you may have heard some verses and some ideas and you're thinking, well, you know, I'm not sure how I feel about that. Well, I'm not sure how you feel about it either.

But I am concerned how you think about it. And I believe God is too, because He gave us this book to change the way you think. To change the way you think.

And that'll change who you are. So, may God work on all of our hearts this morning. Amen.

Okay, as we begin this morning, let us once again prayerfully trust God for these things. As we think back to the first wedding, as we said yesterday, praise God, the Bible begins and ends with a wedding. And so, God is very concerned about these subjects and very interested in these subjects.

It's not a little subject in the Word of God. It's not just one of those things that He adds on just a couple of verses here and there. But as we look at that first wedding, as we're calling it here with Adam and Eve, we can see it was He, God, who put Adam to sleep.

But, as we're going to talk more about today, it was also God who woke him up. And there's a time to be asleep, but there's a time to wake up. And so, as we look at this subject in Proverbs where it talks about finding a wife, and if we remember our definition from yesterday, the definition of findeth is to obtain by seeking.

To obtain by seeking. That there is a time to wake up and do something about this whole thing of finding a spouse. And it was God who then gave him that gift of a wife.

Adam gave Eve to him. And that first marriage was born or created by God's hand being involved in it. And so, at this time, we have brought ourself in the last messages.

These messages are just kind of like stair steps. You know, one builds on the other as you try to get to the top of where you want to go. And so, at this time, we are trusting that we've taken those first steps.

We talked about the last couple of days. And you are ready to court. And it is time to be awake and to begin obtain by seeking a spouse.

I guess the first question we have to ask then is, okay, are you sure it is time to be awake? Or how can you know for sure? And I don't know that I have all the right answers, but if you listen carefully to the testimonies, because this is what I want to share too this morning, there was one little thread that was fairly common, I think, in almost everybody. Did you catch it? And then right after something happened in most of those young people's lives, a courtship began fairly quickly. Did you notice that? Most of them were sort of at a point where maybe they were thinking about things or struggling with things or there were other things.

And when they reached a point of, and I think almost everybody used this word surrender, when they finally surrendered, when they finally stopped fighting this thing and just surrendered it to God and found peace and repented maybe of some things. Did you catch that little thread? When all of them just sort of found that place, it was as if then God said, okay, now you can be awake. And then the doors opened and things happened.

And I've heard similar testimonies enough in my life to know that it's not an accident when you hear testimonies like that. There's something in the spiritual realm going on where God sees this and rewards them by waking up. I remember with my oldest son Weston, it was similar and yet different because he didn't know he was saying what he said.

And it brought a little fear to the heart of his father. He didn't know at the time. But I remember we were talking, I think it was the summer of 2001.

He had just turned 21 in June of that year, Mom. And we were talking and it was one of those things, he and I often had conversations about different things. And we had talked and prayed a little bit about, you know, wonder when it will be time for him to wake up and this thing and on and on.

But one morning we were talking actually just almost somewhat casually in the hall. We were getting ready for work. But we got struck up in a conversation and I forget how it all came out.

But basically what he said to me, he finally just got this very serious look on his face as first born children do sometimes in a home. And he tipped his head and he said, You know, Dad, I've been thinking and praying about this thing just a little bit lately. And do you know what I've decided? And I said, Well, no, son,

what have you decided? He said, I've decided I don't know what I'm doing.

He said, I've decided I'm a young man. I don't have wisdom where I need wisdom. And so you know what? I don't even think I'm going to pray about this subject anymore.

I think I'm just going to give it totally to you. And I'm totally surrendered. And I don't care if I ever get married.

If I serve God the rest of my life single, it's good enough for me. Because I love God so much that that is enough. And so even when I'm supposed to wake up, you tell me when I'm supposed to wake up.

And when I wake up, you know what? You know me better than anybody. You just tell me who to marry and I'll do it. And with that, he just kind of turned and went down the hall.

And of course, at that moment, my heart dropped into my stomach. And I thought, Oh no, he's ready. Because, again, I'd heard enough of these testimonies that I thought, Oh no.

I didn't know he was that mature. He didn't know what he was saying to a father's heart. But to my heart, it was like, Boom! Oh no.

And I think I went and told my wife and said, Do you know he's ready? And I said, I don't really know if I want him to be ready. But he was just so at peace. You heard that word here this morning.

He was so surrendered that whatever you say, whatever God does, I am okay with it. My heart is at rest. And I was just, again, excited to hear that on the one hand.

But just being honest with you, as a father, it's kind of like, and he's your firstborn. And you're the first one of the family to court and all this. And it was kind of like, I didn't know if I was ready for it.

So parents have feelings too, don't we? Those things, we kind of struggle with all those things. And I have to admit, I did struggle a little bit thinking, I don't know if I'm ready for this. Anyway, one thing led to another.

And it was about a year later that he started courting June the next summer, wasn't it, I think. So it took about a year for things to work out. But I have never forgotten that conversation casually in the hall.

It was casual for him, I think, and yet serious. And yet for me, it was one of those turning points in my life as a father where I realized, wow, things are changing. And that was several years ago.

Since then, now we're fixing to have our seventh wedding out of my home here in the next couple of months, Lord willing, July the 14th. So again, there are things like that that are clear, it seems to me, indicators, clear answers where we know, okay. You know, because sometimes you say, okay, well, when is it time to wake up? And I'm not trying to make a rule.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not trying to make a law. But I'm just trying to say, these are some of the principles.

These are some of the things that we see and hear in young people's lives that are a reality that show us God is at work in their life. All right. Then when it comes to this thing of, okay, the young man is awake, and now he's going to make, quote unquote, his choice.

You know, it doesn't always happen because we're flexible, because things are different. Like Brother Gary, where God, in effect, sort of hits him on top of the head. You know, this is the one, and he didn't go down there for that.

It doesn't always happen that way, or it's not always that clear. And sometimes young men, as they're thinking this thing through, they don't necessarily have a particular girl on their heart. And that's okay.

Again, we're flexible. It may be that he needs to pray through that thing, and it may be that he ends up considering more than one girl. I've seen that situation more than once.

And again, because of our teaching yesterday, we don't necessarily believe, or I don't, that there's only one perfect girl, and there's only the one that's out there, and if you miss her, you miss God's will. I don't believe that way. I think we established that yesterday, so I don't want to repeat all those things.

But how does a young man choose? And again, I think we've covered that in some ways as he looks at her characteristics. He looks at compatibility, like we talked about yesterday, and some of those things. And one of the questions, though, I do get asked sometimes by young people, well, what part does looks, or a physical attraction, or those things, what part does that have to play in it? And again, I don't know that I have a simple answer, but let's just look at this verse here for just a minute.

Turn to Proverbs 30. Let's see here. Verse 18, Proverbs 30.18, the Bible says, There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four, which I know not.

Meaning, that are very difficult to just reason out in our logical understanding. The way of an eagle in the air. The way of a serpent upon a rock.

The way of a ship in the midst of the sea. And the way of a man with a maid. I guess the way I take it there is, I don't know that there's a formula you can figure that out.

I don't know that there's a logical thing. There either is a bit of an interest, or spark, or some attraction, or there's not. Because who can know the way of a man with a maid? It's not anything you can make a list of, and figure out, and analyze in some analytical way.

But if that part of it is not part of the process somehow, things don't turn out right. And yet, on the other hand, if the physical attraction leads out, you will often get what you would expect. A relationship based upon outer things, and simply physical beauty or physical attraction.

And yet, leaving off the more important things, the issues of the heart and the spiritual side of things. Biblical courtship is an attraction primarily based on inward character, more than on outward beauty and charm. And yet, we would have to say, we cannot ignore the outward part.

And we don't want to ignore that. We simply want to recognize it and put it in its place. Again, the world and the way they look at dating.

What leads out, or what makes the decision whether a young man goes out on a date with a certain girl? It's the Samson Syndrome, right? She pleases me well. I like the way she looks. I'm going to ask her out.

And these sort of things. And yet, in our way of looking at it, while we don't want to ignore that that can be and should be part of the formula. Or part of the way a young man thinks.

Because who can know those things, as it says here, or figure them out? We don't want to lead with that thing. Let me just ask this question. Could it be, I've pondered this a couple of times over the past 11 years.

Could it be that a seemingly, seemingly very spiritual young man picks a girl who is outwardly, looks a certain way, and yet is not spiritual herself? Maybe she's fairly worldly and sensual in many ways. Could it be that he is giving away what is really in his heart? You know, who you choose to court, is it a revelation of some things that are deep in your heart? I think it is. I think who a young man chooses, because this is the person he wants to share his heart and life with the rest of his life.

And if he just chooses on outward things, that becomes evident, really, not just of what his choice is outwardly, but it becomes a revelation of what his heart is inwardly. Does it not? And so, you know, we need to ask those questions. You know, there may be electricity.

There may be chemistry. But is God in it? Is it spiritual? What is the basis of these things? Remember what we said yesterday. Only God can make a marriage.

Those outward things don't make a marriage. We said yesterday, what God hath joined together. God makes a marriage, not those outward things.

Well, at this point, then, things can be done different ways, meaning the Lord can bring a young lady to a man's attention, as we heard here this morning. Or the young man is given, perhaps, a suggestion or a name from his authorities, either his parents. I've seen it in sometimes even where ministers get involved, Brother Mose, and give suggestions about praying about it and knowing the young men.

The young man, or maybe there's not parental authorities. I know that has been done. And I believe God allows that flexibility for authority oversight and bringing those things into people's lives.

Now, as you talk to your authorities and thinking of the principles we discussed yesterday, and then the specific girl comes to mind, what I would suggest, and again, I think we heard it in the testimonies this morning, is just because a specific girl comes up doesn't take away the need to be very careful and to pray and seek the Lord. Because this is a serious decision. If acted upon, it could affect and will affect the rest of your life if the answer is yes and things proceed.

But, let's say the young man goes to his parents. The name is a name that he has come up with and prayed about it. And he goes to his own parents, or he goes to his own spiritual authorities, and let's suppose the answer is no.

They're not in agreement. The parents are not clear. Or the spiritual authorities are not clear.

What do we do with that? What does the young man do with that? Turn to 2 Corinthians 12, 2 Corinthians 12, verse 8. And there's a principle here that I think we need to see in the Word of God. 2 Corinthians 12, verse 8. Again, we're at the point where the young man has gone to his authorities, whether it's his parents or ministers, and the answer is no. The Bible says here, our brother Paul in the Bible is praying.

And he says, For this thing I besought the Lord thrice. That's three times. That it might depart from me.

By the way, he got his answer three times. No, no, no. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. And I guess the thing that I want to say is, you know, sometimes we pray. We go to our Heavenly Father.

And the answer is no. And we should be satisfied with that. Now, sometimes we pray and we go back again.

And we ask God, you know, God are you sure? And we try to press through that thing. But I think there reaches a point, even with God, and that's the point that's going on here, where we realize, oh, the answer is no. And I need to actually turn this thing around and realize God is using this in my life to give me more grace and to teach me something.

And so, I don't know how to relate all that directly, but I think it's a good principle for us to understand that you may be convinced of a certain young lady, young man, and you may go to your authorities and they may say no. And that doesn't mean you can't make a godly appeal. I believe Paul is making a godly appeal here in prayer.

And you may go back again or maybe three times. I'm not sure how to say all those things or how often. I don't want to make rules, again, as we said earlier.

But be prepared. It could be no. In other words, are you ready? Are you at peace, at rest enough? Are you surrendered enough, like we heard about, that if the answer is no, you can spiritually receive it and walk it out? Again, I think it's very important that you understand, young person, you don't really know if you are under authority until you get a no.

You don't really know if you know how to submit until you're told no. All of us think we can submit. Well, let something that you really want in your life happen and your authorities say no, then you'll know if you know how to submit.

But until that happens, it's a lot of good theology and you can really agree with it in your heart, but is it real in your life? And I would say to you, you don't understand until you've really had to face it and then get a no and deal with it spiritually in the right way, getting grace from God and walking through it. I would also recommend highly to you young people that if you get a no, you don't go to your friends and work up support. I have had that happen once or twice as a minister and then hear about it from somebody else a few months later, how rough we were on this young person.

And what they've done is they've gone out and solicited, they've lobbied for support that things are really tough on them. Why don't you just keep it between you and the Lord and between you and your authorities? When you go out and do that, do you know what you're really saying? I'm not submitting. You are giving yourself away.

Again, a no means a no. A no doesn't mean you go out and solicit support to build up your case. We need to be very careful how we receive these no's.

How we receive these no's that sometimes happen in our lives reveal really how spiritual we are. Well, as you're looking at this young lady, let's get back in the flow of things here a little bit. As you're looking at this young lady, young man, and considering, is she the one? Speaking of authority, I would just say, that is actually a test that you need to have in your mind towards her.

Is she truly under authority? It's interesting that most men have no problems agreeing with the biblical principle of a wife submitting to them. But not very many of them take the time to look and see if she is submitting to her father. Because if she is not submitting at home, if she is resisting authority at home now, just because she changes addresses, doesn't mean she's suddenly going to get it because she moved three miles down the road.

And it's interesting how naive sometimes young men are in this area. They just assume by moving three miles down the road and changing addresses, it's going to change whether or not she understands how to be under authority. That's not true.

It doesn't work that way. If she hasn't learned at home, she's not going to suddenly get it because she moved three miles down the road. And I would just beg you young ladies, again, as you walk through this and find your places, that you need to be glad that you are learning to trust your father, to protect you physically, emotionally, romantically, if I can say it that way, and to help you during this time in your life.

And to help you, as it were, if I can word it this way, I'm not sure how to word it exactly, help you in this process of finding a spouse. And yes, you have the final approval, as the Bible clearly teaches in the story of Isaac and Rebekah. And yet, I realize it is a bit fearful at times, or can seem fearful, to entrust your future to your authorities to bring the right one to you and then pray with you and help you.

And to maybe say no to someone where you don't even have the opportunity to get maybe consulted. And sometimes those things are a little bit difficult to know how to handle. And I would just beg you that you consider the man that is in your life, the authorities in your life, and pray for him.

And that he will do everything in his heart and power to be a blessing in your life. And by trusting, pray that in your own heart, you will see your Heavenly Father at work in your earthly father. Now, it may not be your physical father.

Again, I realize there are exceptions. Some of you are not living in your own homes. But I trust God is being faithful and replacing that father figure in your home, 30, 60, and yea, even, as the Bible says, 100 fold.

But again, I would ask you to pray that you could trust to see your Heavenly Father working through your earthly father. And if you can see it that way, that will hopefully relieve some of those emotions or fearful thoughts that can happen. Alright, let's move on here.

Well, young men, I guess I would like to say one more thing to you on this subject of authority and try to make it a little bit more personal. And just maybe say it like it is. If as a young man, you cannot truly be under authority at peace and at rest, if you have not found that sweet place of being under authority yourself, without being anxious, without being fretful, without bucking, without kicking against the pricks, you will probably not be able to make a good leader.

You know, if you do not know how to follow yourself, how are you going to expect to have someone follow you? There's a lot of ways to think that through. But, you know, you really need to wrestle with that. I'm sometimes surprised when young men come around and ask, you know, about this girl or that girl, and I realize the young man himself has no idea how to be under authority.

And yet, he feels he's ready to go ask a young lady to be under his authority. Very interesting. Very interesting.

And, young men, until you know where you're going spiritually in your life, you're so settled, you have learned how to walk in this Christian life, and again, as I said yesterday, I'm not saying you're like a 40-year-old man, there's still immaturity in your life, but until there's some steadiness in your life, until you know where you're going, how can you honestly ask somebody to go with you until you know where you're going? You know, just look behind your own path, the track of your life over the last year or two, and if it's kind of like all over the board, until you know where you're going, how can you ask someone to go with you? You know, I'm not talking about perfection. We covered all that yesterday. But I would just beg you to consider some of those things.

Well, as you're choosing this young lady, another good thing to consider and observe is to observe how they conduct themselves in situations where they're around those of the opposite sex. Do they behave themselves? Do they draw undue attention to themselves, flirt, whatever word you want to use? Do they have a clear testimony of purity, both physical and emotional? Those are some of the things as you're making this choice. The other thing that has come up sometimes in some of our circles that I would like to talk about for a few minutes here is as this process gets started, the question has been asked sometimes, well, who should initiate things? Who should start things? Does the young man approach the father of the girl? Or does he wait until the father of the girl approaches him? I believe, and I hope we all agree, that it should be the young man.

If the young man is to be the leader in the home, the spiritual leader in the home, and to lead out in the home, should he not also be the leader here? And again, perhaps there's some highly unusual exception, but I would have to say it would have to be highly unusual, because I don't believe it fits the biblical model. I don't believe this is best. Even as we look at Christ, the bridegroom, who came out of heaven as our spiritual model and pursued us as a bride.

He gave up things. He made sacrifices. Then as He went back to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to convict men, to draw men's heart unto Him, and to bring men unto Him as He is the bridegroom and the head of the church.

And in this way, I believe we follow His lead in many ways. And again, there may be an exception, but I can say I'm glad that Christ didn't just go up to heaven and then wait and see if I would someday discover who Jesus Christ is, but rather He sent the Holy Spirit to convict men, to bring His Word into our hearts, and to change our thinking, and as it were, draw men and woo men unto Him. I wonder how the girl would feel anyway if she figured out someday that dad went out and got her a husband.

I don't know. Again, I can see there might be some exceptions, but I'm giving principles here. It just doesn't seem to follow the biblical pattern and principle of our lives to look at those things in that way.

And so I would just beg us to try to maybe rethink that. I guess the reason I'm bringing it up is over the last ten years I've been a minister, it's been more than a few. It's actually surprised me how many times I've talked to young men about courtship and they've said... I've even spoke to some that I thought were ready for courtship and said, well, are you awake? How are things going? How are you praying? And it's actually surprised me how many have said to me, well, I actually sort of have a girl in mind, but I'm praying that her father will come after me.

He will come to me and tell me he wants me for his daughter. And I was just kind of scratching my head, you know. It can sound sort of spiritual at first, and yet, is it right? Is it based upon biblical principles and does it fit the pattern of the way things should be? And I always tell them, young man, I don't think you're

thinking right.

And we'll have a conversation. And so, that's why I bring it up. I believe there's been a bit of that, may I even say, promoted at some levels in our circles.

And I'd like to bring a little balance to that. I don't think that's the right model. I don't think that's the way we want to go.

Now, of course, this in no way downplays the role of the father or the young lady in the courtship. Yes, the young girl, the young lady that's in the home, is a precious treasure to the father there, to the family. And she is much loved and all those things.

And her personality, her situation, her spiritual life do need to be considered very much in all of this. And yet, I want to again raise up the principle that I gave yesterday. And that is, you know, the woman was made for the man.

And so, if in the courtship, the will of the girl, the wishes of the girl, the gifts of the girl lead out in the courtship and are raised up to such a high level that they sort of make the courtship happen, I believe we're setting a wrong pattern. Not only for the courtship, but what if that carries into the marriage? Isn't that kind of interesting that everything that she wants sort of leads out and then on the day they get married, boom, it's supposed to flip back the other way. I wonder if it will.

I don't know. Maybe it will. But I just have some questions about that.

It just doesn't seem to flow with my understanding of the overall heart of God in Scripture on this thing. And so, I would just ask you to reconsider some of those things. Okay, then I think we're at the point now where the young man does come to the father.

Whether he comes in person. I've seen young men come in person. They make an appointment like Brother Gary shared.

I've seen young men write a letter to the father. Maybe the father is far away and he can't get to him. I've seen different things like that work.

But anyway, somehow along the way, he finds enough of courage, as Brother Gary talked about there, to present himself to the father. And you know, maybe that's okay. Is it alright sometimes to be nervous in life? I think some situations are serious enough.

Some situations are weighty enough that it's alright to have a bit of a sweaty palm. And it's okay to feel this is serious. This is not a little thing.

And to feel a little bit of the weight of that settle on our hearts. I don't know that that's all a bad thing. That the seriousness of it comes upon us in that way.

And then the father receives that information from the young man. And again, at that point, things could stop fairly quickly. The father may, for whatever reasons, have an answer fairly quickly.

And again, that would be my encouragement to the fathers. I've heard again many stories of fathers dragging that out for months and months and months. And I don't know how to balance all those things or say them right.

But I believe that we should know in a fairly short order, whether it's a few weeks or what. I don't want to put law to this. And if the answer is no, then the answer is no.

And you need to spare the young man the time. Because the more time those things drag on, then his heart, just because of the way things are, becomes further engaged. And hope springs up.

And his mind is going this way and that way. And so I would just beg a little mercy from you fathers to consider the young men in this. And not make them wait any longer than necessary.

Again, knowing sometimes it may take a little time. You may want to share with your wife. You should share with your wife.

Hear her heart on it. Pray about it together. Seek the Lord.

Maybe get some information. Those things are okay. It's okay.

Sometimes as parents, you have to be a bit of detectives sometimes. You have to do a little investigation. You may not know the young man that well.

That's okay. You need to sometimes discern those things and seek those out. And speak to some people who maybe know the young man better.

And so all these things need to be worked out. I've had out of the seven that have courted in my home, I've had both young men and young ladies. And I can speak for the young men.

They like to know that if the father says yes, and that if the young lady says yes, they like to know again pretty soon on that too. It's like, what did Gary say? Three whole days. And maybe that's a little exaggeration.

But they do seem like a long time. And so I don't know how to balance all that or say all those things right. But as a young man, he's by this time rightly or wrongly, and I guess it's rightly, put a lot of time into it.

He may have been praying about it for months. He's talked to a lot of people, his authorities, his ministers. And again, there's no rush on the young lady.

If she needs some time to maybe do some investigation on her part, I think it's all right at this point in time before the courtship begins. If she even asks a few questions. I've had a few young ladies ask me through the years, you know, as they were working through this and their father came to me too and said, well, my daughter wants to know, is it okay to ask questions? I said, yes, now's the time.

You know, don't wait halfway into the courtship and think, well, you know, there's actually ten things I wish I had known. Ask them now. Again, I had one young lady give me a list of 200 questions once to give to the young man, and I asked her to pare it down a little bit.

I thought that was over much. But, you know, it is a time, though, to ask some questions because you may not know the young man. And there may need to be some questions.

There may be some doctrinal issues. There may be some beliefs that are very precious to you that you have and you, for whatever reason, don't know where this young man is at. And if you don't understand where he's at, it may be difficult for you to find your way, you know, even through a courtship.

And so, again, there's a time to ask some of those questions. And I believe it's okay to ask some of those questions before a courtship begins. And, you know, I think there has been at times the idea put forth, even in our circles, that all this stuff is a big surprise and the girl knows nothing and all this sort of thing.

And I'd like to maybe debunk some of that, I guess, a little bit or balance some of that. I actually believe it's good for the young lady to be involved in the process of praying, understanding, maybe asking a question. You know, reading her Bible and seeking the Lord.

You know, it brings a soberness to her heart too, doesn't it, young ladies, to think, okay, wow, someone is asking for me. Okay, I'm excited on the one hand, but on the other hand, where am I at? And it causes us to look into the mirror of our own soul and brings a soberness to us that we need to ask ourselves some questions rather than just hear somebody's asking and maybe make a quick yes just based on emotions or because we're excited or this or that or whatever. And so, I would encourage you young ladies to take it as seriously as well.

I encourage you fathers to, as early as you practically can in the process, involve your young ladies in it. Because if they're not a mature spiritual young lady ready for courtship, then we shouldn't even be considering it anyway. But if they are a spiritual mature young lady, they should be, I believe, involved at some level.

Again, not if the answer is no from the parents. I believe there's really no reason to stir her thinking up. If the answer is clearly no from the parents, then why stir her up or get her thinking about something that you've already decided? That wouldn't seem to be expedient or judicious in this matter.

But again, if there is some positive feelings from the parents and other godly authorities, ministers, whatever, I think involving the young lady is a lot of wisdom. Again, as we said yesterday, in looking at the story somewhat of Isaac and Rebekah, we saw Laban and Bethuel there. They believed that this thing proceeded from the Lord.

They finally gave it to Rebekah who was able to say, you know, will thou go with this man? And she said, I will. So, it's at that point that she gives her final yes or no. And again, as we said all along, even yesterday, I think we made this point, but we'll repeat it for everyone here.

If she says no at that point, it does not mean that she's unspiritual. And you know, there can be a lot of pressure just because of the situation put on the young lady because her father has said yes. Her mother has said yes.

Her ministers maybe have said yes. His parents have said... It's almost like there's these six, seven, eight other people who've said yes and it's like there's something pushing on her. And yet in her heart, she's not clear.

And she's even prayed about it. Maybe she's asked questions. Whatever.

She's still not clear and the answer is no. And I would say, that's okay. In fact, it can be the best thing.

And I would hope that the young men, if they get the no at that time, even though it's somewhat sad maybe, somewhat difficult, he's actually glad because again, I remember my two oldest sons, Weston and Tanner, that's what they said to me. They said, you know, if the answer is no, I want it to be a clear no. But if the answer is yes, I want it to be a resounding yes.

I don't want anything in between. Because, you know, they needed that confirmation too. They didn't want sort of a, well, yeah.

You know, I mean, they wanted a yes or a no. And if it's no, that's okay too. They can give that to the Lord.

And yes, maybe deal with a little bit of, you know, some emotions or things that were there. But lay that thing down in peace that a no is given. And that it's not an unspiritual situation to walk through those things.

So, you know, God help us as a church to be encouraging to those that walk through these things. I have had the opportunity to walk through a few of these things with a number of young men where they've gotten no's and seen various responses. But overall, most of the young men that I've seen were, you know, in the long run glad for the no.

They were able to see the spiritual implications of it that God is at work. Okay. And they were able to come to a place of peace and rest with that no.

And so I'm glad for that. All right. But what do you do if you get a yes? Okay.

What do you do if you get a yes? Okay, you jump up and down perhaps. And there is excitement and all those sort of things. But a yes is given.

And praise God, it does happen most of the time that way. And then things begin to happen in the courtship, the actual courtship experience. And you start getting questions like, how long does a courtship last? Or what do we do during a courtship? Or what's okay to do? Or what's not okay to do? And some of these practical issues of the courtship experience itself start coming to light.

And how to walk through all those things. And again, I believe our principle here of being understanding, being loving, being flexible. We do come from, in our church, we're a bit eclectic in many ways.

We come from different backgrounds, different understandings. And yet we do want guiding principles. We do want right principles.

We do want the Word of God and the Spirit of God and the blessing of God and the blessing of the brotherhood to be on these things. And so while we're allowing for flexibility, I think there are some things that we want to look at here for a few minutes this morning. I think it's very good at the beginning of a courtship for, if at all possible, I know distance doesn't always allow this, but whenever possible, and maybe then sharing it through letter, I don't know, that the parents of both the young man and the young lady or the authorities of both have an opportunity to communicate together.

We've had the opportunity to do that several times and found it to be a real blessing to try to come to an understanding of, you know, sometimes you enter courtships and people have different expectations, different visions, different dreams of how a courtship is going to work out. And, you know, it's good to work through some of those things at the beginning rather than just starting and finding out later. People have unmet expectations.

And so if you can, have a meeting with, communication is vital at this point, have a meeting with the other family, the young man, the young lady, and lay out some guidelines on how often they'll get together, when they'll get together, and all those kinds of things. And the courtship begins with some of those things

laid out. I would say a couple of general thoughts that I think are very important in courting activities.

One of the first principles is take it slow in the beginning. You know, take it very slow in the beginning with special carefulness for the first month or two. It is better to begin slowly in the area of courting because as these hearts begin to come together as time goes on, then if issues rise up, it's sometimes a little bit more difficult to deal with them.

But it's better in the beginning, I believe, to begin slowly and discern more fully, is this a marriage that is going to make a match? Is this thing going to proceed? Because as we said yesterday, sadly, although there are not many compared to the number of courtships that make it, there are some times where the courtship, you discern a month or two into it, this is not a match. This is not going to work. And one or the other of the couple feels a need to either lay it down for a season or maybe lay it down completely.

Whereas if you allow at the very beginning a rush of emotion and much romantic talk and all that thing starts spilling and all these things, I believe we can get ourselves into trouble. And so I would just ask for a little consideration from the parents. Again, help the young people to begin slowly because, you know, the emotions will come.

The love will come. You don't need to rush it, but rather discern together. Is this thing coming together? And then as it does, yes, amen, the hearts will come together.

There will be romance. There will be, I remember right before Weston, I think, courted, we had a dear friend for many, many years from the south. Their oldest daughter, I think, started courting maybe a year or two before Weston did, maybe several years now.

And I remember I was down there visiting with him about this time and we were sitting in his family room and he said, I think they've been courting, whatever it was, seven, eight, nine months. I think we were up late one night sharing with them. And, I mean, this daughter in their family was like, she was the firstborn eldest child.

She was, you know, everybody's hero. All the other little children in the family, she was their hero. They adored her.

And they were all, though, this night complaining about her. And I was like, they don't ever talk this way about her. What's going on? So I said to him, brother, what's going on? And he said, well, they've been courting about seven or eight months now and the wedding day is now only, whatever it was, I think it was only a month away or something.

And to tell you the truth, we can hardly stand having her around. And I said, what are you saying? You know, I wasn't clued into all this stuff. I didn't have anybody courting.

I said, what do you mean? He said, well, she's, their courtship has, you know, it started slow but it's so grown. Their hearts are so almost together now that it's almost like she's changed addresses already. And it's almost like she's really not here.

In fact, she's really not here anymore. And when somebody's not here anymore, there gets to the point where you kind of don't want them here anymore either. And to hear this coming out of his mouth, I mean, I was just, I was reeling.

Because, I mean, she was like the hero of the family. Everybody adored her. But her heart was just going.

So my point in all that is saying, don't worry about the hearts. They're going to come together, okay, you know, even in the best of homes. I don't, I think sometimes people worry about the romance more than they should.

And I'm not against romance. I'm for it. I think it's, scriptural romance is a beautiful thing.

It's a right thing. But allow it to come as it comes. Don't rush that thing.

You know, go a little slow in the first month or two to allow some time to discern some of these things. And I think you'll be blessed if you can do it that way. All right, again, we heard it here today.

I think in the testimonies, I just want to reemphasize that. You know, you have this initial meeting with the parents to decide some guidelines for courting. But may I say to you young people and to you parents, your job isn't finished yet.

You need to be involved in the courtship as it goes along. And I think you heard that, I believe, from most all of the testimonies this morning. To give that guidance.

In other words, it's still a courtship. It's not a marriage. The Bible says, for this reason do you leave a home.

And that's for the marriage. But until they've left the home, they're still under the authority of the home. And there still needs to be input, guidance, help, and all of those things.

And again, I fear sometimes a courtship starts and parents tend to kind of think, well, they're courting now. And they kind of back off. And I have found and my wife has found that courting time, there's almost kind of a bit of a joke in our house, that means you're going to actually spend more time with them than you did before.

I don't know how we say it. But, you know, there's sort of a joke in our family that if it's late at night and the door is closed, everybody will go, oh, that's the courting one. And they'll know they're in there sharing their heart.

Okay, this is what happened on our date. And this is how it's going. And do you think this is okay? And back and forth.

And there's all sorts of communication. And so I would just encourage you, that's good, that's right. Because as the way some of them have shared it in our home, and I think they're right, some of the young people that are courting, they say, you know, this is my last chance these last few months here to get some wisdom pretty soon.

I'm going to have my own home and I won't have this opportunity. And I want all the communication I can get now. And it's not like they lose your phone number when they move out.

But it's different because then they're in their own home. And even though you can still have an influence, even though they're still part of the family, they're not part of the family in the same way. Something changes.

When that wedding day takes place, there is another home, another authority that takes place. And some of them begin to sense this as they go through their courtship. And they realize, I want to get more out of this before I'm gone.

And so I just encourage you parents to do that. One of the things we want to talk about this morning for a few minutes is this thing of... I think you heard the phrase here perhaps this morning in the testimony, it's a hands-off courtship or purity in a courtship. We heard it said a few different ways.

Let's read a couple of different verses here. In the beginning, I think we'll... Well, we already read 2 Corinthians 11-2. But did you notice in there when it says in the last part of the verse that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

And that principle of chastity or chaste means clean, untouched, pure. Okay? Let's look at a few other verses in the Bible. Let's look at Ruth 2. Chapter 2 of Ruth.

Verse 9. Ruth. Chapter 2. Verse 9. The book of Ruth. Chapter 2. Verse 9. The Bible says, Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap.

And go thou... This is Boaz talking to Ruth. And go thou after them. Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art at thirst, go into the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

And let's go over to 1 Corinthians 7. 1 Corinthians 7. Verse 1. 1 Corinthians 7. Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. And again, there's that idea of chastity. And let's try Revelation 14.

Revelation 14. Verse 4 says, These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb with us wherever He goeth.

These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb. And the word not defiled means untouched again or totally clean. I think I have another verse here.

Let me see if I can find it. Well, let's just read this verse in Hebrews 13. Verse 4. It says, Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled or pure, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

And there's many other verses we could turn to about chastity and pureness and not touching and these sort of things. And it seems clear in the Bible that there is a principle that God never intended any level of even limited romantic touching prior to marriage. It seems the way God has made men and women in this whole thing of intimacy and procreation that one touch leads to the next touch.

And so on. You know, if you read, how does it go in James 1.14? How does James say it there? But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

And the reason I say that verse is it's kind of a step letter. In other words, it starts here, then it goes there, then it goes there. And it just seems to be that way with touching.

When does the touching stop and start? You know, once it starts, the way we are made, it seems like one touch will lead to the next one and a little more and a little more and a little more and so on and so forth. And so, we as a church and I hope as fathers and families have all agreed with this principle of chastity,

purity, cleanness, of not being defiled, and what we would call a hands-off courtship. To make, as it were, it says in 2 Timothy 2, I believe it is, to flee youthful lust.

To put off those things and to put ourselves in a position where we make no provision for the flesh, where we actually are saying by our desires and our determinations, as you heard in the couples that were testifying, they had a desire, they had a guideline, they had a vision that they would make no provision for the flesh. And what they were really saying is, we don't trust our flesh. If you think you can get away with these things, what you're really saying is, I'm different.

I can handle it. I trust my flesh. And I would say to you, no you can't.

Based on the Word of God, you can't trust your flesh. And if you think you can, you're not, again, thinking according to the Scripture. The Scripture teaches us that we cannot trust our flesh.

Our flesh is not a trustable character. The flesh is something the Bible talks about as being what? Put to death, put away, put down. It gives us no indication that there should be any trust on my part.

You know, my flesh, I can trust my flesh. It'll work out. No, the Bible doesn't seem to give us that provision to think that way.

And yet, shame on us when some of us maybe think that way. So, during the courtship, we want to lift this thing up very highly. It's been a tremendous blessing, I believe, for many a year now in our circles, Brother Moe's.

And many couples have beautiful testimonies of the joy and of the blessing and the preciousness of being able to say the first time they kissed was on the day they were married and so on with all those stories. And, you know, we don't want those testimonies to end. We want them to continue and be a blessing for years and generations to come.

Well, as far as courtship activities, again, it's hard to spell all those things out here. And, again, I'm not desiring in any way to give rules. But just as a few ideas and guidelines, I do think there is a principle in Scripture honoring that we can see that when men and women in the Bible got alone or spent too much time alone, whether it was Samson and Delilah or Shechem and Dinah or some of those things, or David when he was alone, as it said, everybody else was gone on the roof of his house.

And he saw Bathsheba and her husband was gone and they were alone. There's a big thing made of all that aloneness. There's a principle there where, you know, for the couple to spend lots and lots and lots of alone time doesn't seem wisdom.

It seems that primarily the majority, not all, don't misunderstand me, the majority of their time would be spent in a chaperone situation, whether it's family activities, church activities, ministry activities and all those things. And yet there is a very great need for them to be able to learn to communicate and spend time together. And so I do believe there is that provision for allowing some alone time in a careful situation where everybody knows where they are, how long they'll be, what they're doing, all of those parental protections, if I can say them that way, that still gives them enough of alone time where we know where they are and what they're doing, and where that communication... I've had the sad thing, I've had a few couples tell me through the years, we didn't have enough time.

It was as if all of our date time was spent with other people. And when we got married, we didn't know each other. We've actually had some of those people say that.

And so we want to have a little balance with this. We want to be able to say these things the right way. There is a need for them to spend some time where they're sharing hearts.

Sometimes, and we encourage all of our couples greatly, that they build a spiritual, devotional relationship. That part of that time that they're alone, they're actually spending time in devotions. They're spending time praying together.

They're spending time reading the Word of God. It gives the young man an opportunity to exercise himself in leading out in devotions and sharing what God is doing in his life from the Word of God. I believe, personally, that too much alone time, even in the car, is not a good idea.

Again, I'm just giving you some of our guidelines that we try to walk out here. If the young man wants to pick her up, take her to church, those sort of things, that's fine. But if there's going to be a long car ride for a long time, or any time at night, they need to be chaperoned is the way we look at it.

Because again, we want to make no provision for the flesh. We want to clear an open testimony with each other and with our community. And so long, long periods of time of driving, even alone in the car, we did not feel like that was a blessing, that was not best.

So we had plenty of brothers and sisters in our home that were very excited to ride with them. It's my turn, it's my turn. Or if it was after dark or whatever, maybe we were having meetings here at the church for Bible school or whatever it was.

So those are just some things that you just need to consider. How to work through all those things in your own family, I'm certainly not sitting here trying to tell you. But I do think you need to think through those things.

The point is, these are very real things. And you need to learn how to think through what is best. What is the best testimony? What is a clear testimony? What would God have me to do? How can I walk uprightly in all things? Even a courtship.

Well, time goes on and the courtship proceeds. And there comes a time where the wedding plans come. And I'm sure Brother Moze will be sharing about that, so I won't get into wedding plans.

But part of the courtship, that last month before the wedding, is a very important time. There's some nervousness, there's some things happening, there's lots of excitement too. And it's an important time for the parents to just lovingly spend time with the couples.

There's even a need there, probably whatever, a week or two weeks or whatever it is, several weeks before the wedding, of spending time in counseling them. And what we would call premarital counseling about their physical life. Because they've had a hands-off courtship.

And now it's time to share with them some truths and some principles in God's Word. About what God has to say about this subject of the physical side of marriage. It is definitely a very, very critical, important part of marriage.

And God has a lot of good and wonderful things to say about it. And it's that time in the courtship, and it's the blessed opportunity for the parents, or godly authorities, ministry or whatever, to share some of those things. And to help the couple through the last week or two there to prepare for their honeymoon, to prepare for their life together.

And so there are many other areas that we could cover this morning, many other specifics. But I think I want to bring it to a close at this point. But I do want to maybe begin a little bit, or end as I began this morning, to you young people, and this whole thing of surrender.

And having it as a supreme, may I say, act of trust in God. And maybe I could ask you young people these three questions. Maybe you should write these down, I don't know.

But I'm going to ask you young people three questions. And you parents, you listen in as well, and maybe you write them down. And see if you can answer these questions for the young people in your home that you think may be, quote unquote, of a marriageable age.

Number one. Young person, can you say you are willing, if God so chooses, to remain single with Christ alone as your spouse? Can you say you are willing? Notice the word willing. Number two.

Can you say you are willing, if God so chooses, to remain single with Christ alone as your spouse? Number two. Can you say you are willing, if God so chooses, to be married but to allow God, using your godly authorities, to direct whom you should marry? Can you say you are willing, if God so chooses, to be married but allowing God and your godly authorities to direct to whom you should be married? Number three. Can you say you are willing, if God so chooses, to be married and to allow God and your godly authorities to help determine the timing? So this is the timing question.

Can you say you are willing, if God so chooses, to be married and to allow God and your godly authorities to determine the timing? And I would say to you, only when you can answer yes to each of these three questions can you say you are surrendered. These are surrender questions. Only when you can answer yes to these three questions, or questions like these, can you say you are surrendered and you have surrendered your relationships to the Lord.

Turn to Psalm 37. Someone read this verse this morning. It was on my heart as well, so I think it bears reading again.

It's so important that we get this principle and that we see it and live it and let God change our life with it. Psalm 37. Chapter 37 of Psalms, verse 5 says, Commit thy way unto the Lord.

And what the psalmist is saying is surrender. That is really what he's saying. You know, when you commit it to Him, it means you give it to Him.

You surrender it to Him. You're not holding on to it yourself. You've let go of the reins of that thing.

And I know it's an act of surrender. It's an act of trust to surrender. But he's just saying let go.

Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. Amen.

Well, bless God. Thank you all for listening to this message. I trust and hope along with the other messages and testimonies that we've had so far and the message we'll have this afternoon that God will richly bless you, encourage you, challenge you, maybe change some of your thinking, maybe encourage

you to study more and look into this and pray more and seek God's will and direction for your life.

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