

# (Spiritual Guidelines for Courtship) Preparing for Courtship

by Rick Leibee

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of courtship and marriage in the Bible, and highlights the essential ingredient in a successful courtship as the Spirit of Jesus Christ in your life.*

**Duration:** 1:28:18

**Scripture:** Malachi 2:14, Luke 16:19-31

**Topics:** "Christian Courtship", "Gospel Centered"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a gospel-centered approach to relationships, particularly courtship. He urges young people to consider the significance of their relationship with Christ before pursuing romantic relationships. The goal of courtship, according to the speaker, is not simply to court, but to ultimately get married. He also discusses the dangers of dating, highlighting the potential for multiple short-term relationships and unsupervised activities. The sermon references biblical passages, such as Genesis and 1 Thessalonians, to support the speaker's points.

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## Transcript

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

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Greetings to all.

Beautiful Saturday morning. We get the blessing of finding ourselves here in the Lord's house together. Why don't we stand to our feet and begin with a word of prayer this morning.

Our loving Heavenly Father, we praise You this morning. We honor You. We lift up Your name.

Blessing Your name. Thanking You, Father, for blessing us with Jesus, Your Son. Thanking You for life, for newness of life.

Thanking You for our bridegroom, Jesus. Thanking You that there is a marriage supper of the Lamb that we want to partake of someday in Heaven. Thank You, Father, for all these things.

Bless us now. Give us Your Spirit. Teach us today about marriage and courtship and relationships and love and bridegrooms and brides and all these things.

Many wonderful pictures that You have tried to use to teach us Many wonderful things these past 2,000 years. May we learn more of them even today. Help us, Father, to open up our hearts to these truths, to Your ways, Father.

We love them and we need to see them more clearly each day that we live. Thank You for this time. Bless those that have come today.

Reward them, Father. Teach them, guide them, give them what they need that they may continue to grow in their spiritual journey towards perfection in Jesus Christ. Thank You, Father.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Alright, you may be seated.

Well, welcome to this little weekend on relationships and courtship in particular. I was reminded just as I was sitting there this morning and we were singing a little bit and thinking about different situations and things I was going to share on and it came to me once again, I didn't court this way. And I thought, there's probably quite a few people who didn't really have a courtship, who maybe dated in a more worldly way or traditional sense that they wouldn't do it that way again today if they had it to do over again.

Is there anybody else like that here? I figured there was. Okay. Well, may I say to all of us, you know, that's okay.

You know, that's in the past. There's lots of things in the past that we wouldn't do the same and yet we can still learn. Those of us that may not have done it the way we would do it again today if we had the chance.

But what God cares about today for those of us that raised our hand is our marriage relationship, how we're walking with Jesus, how we're walking today, are we growing in grace and all of those things. So I hope nothing that we say here these next two days, these next thirty-some hours, discourages anybody as you look back. I don't think that's the purpose of these kind of meetings is to look back with discouragement, but rather to be thankful that we can go forward with our families in a better way, in a more blessed way, and not have to look back and be discouraged.

There may be some regrets. I know we all have those things. But God can forgive those things and we can move on.

I just hope no one is discouraged as you look back, but rather encouraged that we have the opportunity to look at relationships in the light of the Word of God and our relationship with Christ today. I also was thinking this morning a little bit that this situation that we're sitting down in here this morning is somehow a little unique in that normally when courtship is taught, it's usually taught or traditionally taught to a room full of youth. Without the majority of the parents being there.

That's how it's often done. And I guess I would have to say I'm glad it's being done this way this morning. I think this is, may I say, many, many times better because it really is about relationships.

And as we will find, and I'm sure many of you will agree as we go through this weekend, the courtship process is not just about the young man and the young lady, but it's about her parents and his parents and the church and all these relationships and all these things happening and flowing together. And so this weekend, thankfully, none of us are excluded from that. We're all here together as a church and as parents.

And so I feel this is right. This is probably the best way, if I can say it that way, to have a teaching like this. I would also like to say to you parents that are here, I hope this isn't the first time your children have heard the term courtship.

I hope some of you are taking time from time to time and teachable moments of family life and family devotions to talk about these kind of subjects of marriage and courtship and God's heart for these things. Because it is, I believe, very much a part again of family life to look at these subjects. And as the parents share these things from time to time, I believe it helps the young people in the home and the children, even from a young age on, to get used to thinking of courtship and God's will for marriage and God's way of finding a marriage partner just a part of their life.

That it's not just something new they have to try to figure out when they're 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, or whatever. But they grow up hearing these kinds of thoughts. That it's nothing really new.

And that it is part of their own convictions. That they don't have to wrestle with a teaching on courtship, but rather it's already part of who they are and part of their convictions as a family. I think that's very important.

So I just want to encourage you parents. Don't just say, well, yeah, we had a teaching. Brother Rick did a teaching on courtships three or four years ago.

Yeah, here's the tape, son. I don't want you to do that. There's nothing wrong with relisting a tape, but it should be something that we're all involved in.

I believe your relationship, parents, and we'll talk more about this later, but I just want to lay this down again as a challenge and as an encouragement at the beginning. Your relationship with your children and your young people is critical in this whole process, in this whole part of their life. Getting their hearts, keeping their hearts through the teen years.

And I have seen enough sorrow and heartache from young people through the years where they don't have this relationship with their parents. And of all the times in their life to not have that relationship, that is a problem. It is during courtship where they really need input.

They need guidance. They need somebody to talk to, somebody to unburden their heart with that is older and wiser. And if you don't have their hearts, you're probably not going to hear their hearts.

May I just say it that way? And that's a shame, I believe. It hurts everyone. As I thought of this topic again this morning, I just hope everyone is encouraged about this topic.

I hope everyone is a little bit, may I say, even excited about this topic. We need to remember that in the Bible, the Bible begins and really ends with a wedding. So I don't know if that means everything in

between is a courtship.

I'm not sure how to say all that. But this is not a little subject in the heart of God. The Bible basically begins with a wedding and ends with a wedding.

And so there's something about this relationship and how all these things work out in our hearts with Christ, in our hearts with our spouses and courtship, that is very important to God. And it's not a little thing for Him. Why don't we turn just as a simple opening scripture, but I think a very powerful one, if we'll let it settle into Proverbs 18, verse 22.

Proverbs 18, verse 22. This morning, the title of this message is just called, oh, what did I title this one? Preparing for Courtship. Or Beginning Courtship Principles, but I think we'll call it Preparing for Courtship because there's some things we need to look at a little bit ahead of time here to lay some foundations.

And then the weekend will build and we'll get more specific and more detailed, if I can say it that way, as we go through the weekend. And just so that you know the order, we'll share a message here this morning. I'll have a message and after that, we'll have a couple of testimonies from some courtships and then we'll have some time for questions and answers before the noon meal.

And then that same order will pretty much be then in the afternoon when we come back together here. Okay, this verse here in Proverbs 18, verse 22 is an interesting verse, a simple verse, but a very revealing verse, I think, about God's heart. It says in verse 22 of Proverbs 18, 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. So we see here in this simple verse, God is not silent concerning this subject of finding a life companion or a life partner. He has something to say here.

First of all, He declares it to be a good thing. He declares it to be good. And that word good is the Hebrew word t-o-w-b.

I think it's pronounced tobe or tube. I'm not sure which it is in the Hebrew. And it means bountiful, better, best, gracious, precious.

It's the idea of finding wealth. Great wealth has come into your life. You know, it's this bountiful wealth and precious thing.

And so God is saying that when you go through this, we could call it courtship process of finding a wife, finding a spouse, finding a life companion, that when you find one, you have found something precious, full of wealth, it is better, it is best, and so on. And these kinds of words are used. Bountiful, gracious.

Again, so from the eyes and the heart and here the words of God, we see that finding a spouse is a good thing. But then He goes on. He doesn't stop there.

Well, let me define another word for you. Findeth. This word findeth in the Hebrew means to obtain by seeking.

Obtain by seeking. Now, if you're going to find something, you don't sit at home and just hope it pops up one day. Okay? Part of the courtship process we're going to look at this weekend is, you know, it's not a mystical thing.

I think there's almost a bit of mysticism that sometimes creeps into it that, well, if it's God's will that I'll get married, He'll reveal it to me. I would say, do you read your Bible? It is the general revealed will of God for most people to find a spouse. Do you believe that's true? I don't think I have to read all the verses.

It is the general revealed word. Now, there are specific wills of God that could countermand that. 1 Corinthians 7. Brother David Cooper preached the whole message, I believe, on that.

Last year or the year before, I'm forgetting, brother. Two years ago. Whenever it was.

A year and a half. So, there are exceptions to that. And when they are, God gives grace, and God gives the power and the blessing to live that single life for Christ.

Right? But, other than those, may we say, exceptions where God does that, the general revealed will of God is for people to find a life companion. And so, it's not some mystical thing that's just going to accidentally happen to you as you sit at home. There is a part of the process of obtaining by finding, or obtaining by seeking is the definition of this word.

Alright, the other thing that he says about this, this is interesting, is once you do obtain a wife, you obtain something else. You obtain favor of God. And that word favor means delight and well acceptable.

Now, I'm not trying to start another religion and say here that the way you get God's favor is to find a spouse. I don't think that's what God is even saying. But there is a true principle here, isn't there? That God is saying, this is good.

This is a blessing. This is right. Amen.

And He delights in you doing something that is right. And He delights, and may I say, in this area of you being delighted because when you find something that's bountiful and beautiful and precious, God is for you. That's the other thing you need to remember, dear people.

This is not a test that you need to be negative about. This is a blessing. God is for you.

And so, He's delighted, I think, that you're delighted. And He's blessing you in that. And you get favor in that situation.

So, this is a very simple verse, but it's a very profound verse that we need to have in our minds and in our hearts so that our hearts can somewhat be encouraged and even rest in the fact, yes, this is right. This is God's general will for me to walk in and move in in my life. Now, later, we're going to answer the question as best as we can during the question and answer time.

I think I got about 10 or 12 questions. I think 3 or 4 of them was the same question. How do you know when it's the will of God for a particular person or if it's the will of God? I mean, because that's a question because we all love God, right? And we all want God's will.

And so, I don't laugh at that question. That's a very good question. And it's one we need to look at.

And really, part of the answer to that question is we need to look at all of the things we're going to say this weekend because there's not a simple black and white answer. But I'm actually going to try to answer that question at least somewhat this morning during the question and answer time. Amen.

Well, what an important topic for us to spend some time on this morning. I do feel like there's a couple of things I need to say about relationships. And one is this, in terms of a godly courtship.

The essential, the critical, the essential ingredient in any good courtship or marriage, or may I say in any good relationship, is the Spirit of Jesus Christ in your life. Without Jesus Christ, I have found and I believe that you know this is true, without Jesus Christ in your life, in your heart, in your home, your knowledge of real love and your ability to exercise real love of forgiving, self-denial, serving others is so limited that it's just, may I say, totally human. You know? And I don't want my marriage based on just what I have to offer to my marriage.

I was married before I was born again. I was married at age 21. I wasn't born again until I was 29.

And I praise God that we made it through those eight years. Most of my friends during those eight years got a divorce. Probably well over half of my friends were divorced during those eight years.

Out of my college best friends, I had six friends that I considered my best friends in college. All six are divorced at this time. I do not say that because I'm something special.

I say that it's a miracle that I'm not like them. Because if your love, if your ability to love and have a relationship is just based on who you are and your humanness, if I can say that, you are so severely limited, I'm no longer shocked at divorce. Not because I'm negative, because I don't know how I would do things as far as relationship without the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

And now you might be saying, well, Rick, are you saying only people that are born again can be married? Well, I don't know how to say all that, because obviously, no, you don't have to be. But I don't want to be married without Jesus Christ. I don't want to do anything without Jesus Christ.

And so the essential ingredient in a courtship is a mature, godly walk that is full of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And if that's not where you're at, then you don't need to look at courtship. You need to look at something far, far more important.

The next principle, the next thought that I just want to lay out here in the beginning that you must reckon with is this. Again, remembering all the wonderful things I said about courtship and marriage, please balance it a little bit with this. The goal of your life is not to get married, young person.

The goal of your life is not to get married. Just like the goal of your life is not to get a particular job or go to a particular place or even, may I say, join a particular church. Rather, much, much more important, the goal of our life is as we sang that song, what was the second one we sang? Not after love, not the world.

What was our response? I love the Lord. That's the goal of your life is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. That is the goal of your life.

And to give all glory to Him. That is the chief end of man as it says in the Westminster Confession, I forget now, but the chief end of man. And that is the chief.

That means that is the supreme goal and fixation of your life is to love God with all of your heart and bring glory to His name. Let me say it this way from an example. Have you ever been around a courting couple that is so consumed with each other you're uncomfortable just even standing there? Has anybody ever been in that situation? And you're like, I guess I need to leave because I don't even... And you find yourself

just kind of backing up.

And I would say, okay, yeah, I understand. In reality, that can sort of happen sometimes because it's a new thing and it's exciting and we want to give a little grace. But it just proves a little bit of a point.

If you become consumed, if you think you're going to find your fulfillment in that other person, you're wrong. Your final full fulfillment is in Christ. That is something you have to just let it settle and let it become a reality of who and what you are.

One of the problems is that getting married sometimes becomes such a focus for courting couples that they forget some of these primary things. And when they do, it can be uncomfortable to be around them. But if they'll kind of keep that thing a little bit, I don't know if I want to say balanced, but if they'll keep that thing in right perspective maybe, then it's actually very gracious and blessing.

And you even enjoy seeing them learn to get along and learn to draw together. Then it's kind of, I say cute, and it's kind of a little bit, oh, look, things are working there. And we all enjoy seeing that, don't we? We don't mind seeing that.

But when it becomes this sort of all-consuming focus, it's uncomfortable. And we know something just doesn't seem right about all that. So even in the excitement of courting and even in an early marriage, let us not forget the first and greatest commandment.

I know that's so simple, but I just thought, well, you know, we need to say it out loud. It's simple, but it's true because it's very profound. Many young people, I fear, spend too much time daydreaming about this subject rather than using this time as a, and they miss, may I say, a vital opportunity to serve God single.

And may I say, even do things that a married person cannot do. And again, if you read 1 Corinthians 7, I don't want to preach that this morning, there are some things there that are very clear that a single person can do for the kingdom of God that a married person cannot. And so we don't want to ignore that.

That's Scripture. That's true. Amen? So, let's make sure we understand that.

Again, one of the basic problems in courting and even in marriage is that we are looking, may I say, to the wrong place for our security. You know, some people find a security in those things. God never intended for wives to find their fulfillment in their husbands or husbands in their wives.

May God help us find our perspective in this in a spiritual way. Alright, another thing that I want to lay out here this morning for us all as we, and again, this is the kind of thing where we're going to, the messages we'll build. It's kind of like we're building a foundation this morning.

Putting up the base walls, digging the footer. There's just some of these things that we just need to set in order in order to have our minds laid out rightly here to receive some of the specifics because it is my desire and heart with the questions and answers and even with the next two teachings, we'll get more specific and more specific. And I realize that when you get very specific in teaching, you run a great risk of being misunderstood.

So, I'm trying to lay a little foundation. So, you just got to kind of, you know, hang on here with me this morning. And I know you have lots of questions about specifics, but if you'll just kind of take a deep spiritual breath this morning and realize that we have to talk about some of these foundational things so

that when we get to the specifics, you know, we don't hear them wrong.

We don't receive them wrong. That we'll have the right foundation to receive them. One of the things I'd like to say this morning is I don't believe that in any way that I have come up with or that we as a church group have come up with the way or the one and only way to court.

You know, I don't believe that. I'm not trying to say that. But I do believe we can look into God's Word and get some basic, good, solid, right principles that are very, very important.

And within the safe framework of the Word of God, parental authority, the local church, that we can find our way. And that even within that, there is definitely room for flexibility. Flexibility and different types of courtships to evolve.

You should not come away from a weekend like this on courtship teaching with the impression that you are going to be doing it wrong unless you follow all the 24 points that Brother Rick made over the weekend. So, I'm letting you off the hook a little bit. Not on the principles.

Not on the guidelines. Not on the Word of God. But when I start getting specific, I don't want a year from now for you to come and say, Brother Rick, I didn't do point number 17.

Did I do it wrong? Then you didn't hear. Because what we're looking at is principles and relationship. This whole thing is very relational.

And therefore, we're not going to be legalistic and make a list that if you don't do number 16, okay, you failed. You don't know how to court. That's not the point of the weekend.

There is room for flexibility. There are many situations. We're dealing with human beings here.

We're dealing with the human heart. We're dealing with many, many varied backgrounds. Many different preferences, personalities.

There's a lot of factors. Again, the things that are stable are the Word of God and the principles. But within that, there is room for flexibility.

You know, it's like the children of Israel. They were given a list of rules or laws. And there really wasn't much room for flexibility, was there? They either did them or they didn't do them.

And what does the New Testament say about that? The letter killeth. And yet the Spirit giveth life. And so we want to have New Testament courtships where, yes, just like Jesus Christ wasn't afraid to give strong principles.

You know, love your neighbor as yourself. And there's many things Jesus taught very strongly. But He didn't make a list, did He? There's room for application and flexibility.

There's not room for getting away from the Word of God. There's not room for getting away from the principles that Jesus teaches. But He was trying to get it in your heart so that you can live it as it's written in your life rather than written on tablets of stone.

And so let's not become, you know, Jewish quarters here. Let's not become Old Testament courtship. And I fear that in our circles, for some reason, there's a bit of law that has come in in courtship at times.

That people sometimes feel, well, the ideal is up here and I don't measure up, so either I can't court or I shouldn't court or they even feel guilty that they're doing it wrong. And I don't know how to say all those things right. I'm not trying to remove good principles at all.

You're going to hear a lot of strong principles this weekend. But I do believe there is some flexibility and some room for us to find our way through these things. And so I just ask you to consider some of that this morning here.

You do not have to achieve perfection to begin courting. There is room for flexibility in and how we approach this subject. Alright, one of the other things that I would like to share in the beginning here is we want to be spiritual this weekend about this subject.

We want to look at it and get a burden for going God's way. And I know to the parents, if I can just speak to you for just a moment, we desire and we want godly courtships coming out of our homes. We have a great burden for that because we see the mess that the world is made of dating and marriage and home life and all of those things are just a grief to many of our hearts.

And some of us have even seen homes like that or been in homes like that or have relatives and all of those things are a real burden. But I just want to say to the parents, you know, it starts with you and I, dear parent, and that's why I'm glad you're sitting here this morning too. And I'm not just preaching at a youth Bible school.

You say, and I know you do, want godly youth in your home. Well, I guess the question has to be asked, dear parent, what about you? You know, you cannot very easily, I think, get what you are not out of your children. You know, when was the last time that you got a hot coal off the altar of God and gave it to your children in devotions? You know, when was the last time you wept praying for the souls of your children? You know, are you hot? Do you have the spirit of revival in your home, in your heart, in your life? You know, you want godly children, but what about you? Are you a godly parent? You know, it's not a hard concept, but godly parents have godly youth.

You know, that's not a hard thing. Is that a hard thing to figure out? It's really not. And so, I just challenge us as parents sitting here.

Yes, we want godly courtships, but it isn't going to happen just because, you know, somebody follows 24 points that Brother Rick brings out over the weekend. There's got to be some reality in your life too, in your prayer life, in your prayer closet, in your devotions, in your relationship with your children. Now, to you young people, and when I say young people, I don't just mean those that may be sitting here considering themselves of an age where they're, quote, technically ready to court.

By the way, I don't like to talk about ages with courtship. But anyway, we will talk about it anyway because everybody always asks the question. But I'm not just talking to those that may be sitting here and thinking they're 21 or 22.

I'm saying, you know, if you're of the age of accountability, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, whatever it is, young persons, I just have a burden. I wonder if every one of you that is in that age group this morning, if every one of you is truly, genuinely born again and walking with God. This is the first step towards a godly courtship.

You must know God. If you do not have a right relationship with Jesus Christ, you will not have a right relationship with your parents, you will not have a right relationship with anyone, and you will not be able to have a right godly courtship. You know, if your spiritual life, young person, is like this, I got born again, oh, but I fell.

Oh, I had a little revival, but I fell. I stayed there a long time. You know, if that's a description of your spiritual life, you're not ready to court because you don't have that mature, stable, steady walk with Christ.

And again, I'm not talking about perfection. I've already said that. But there must be that steady growing and increasing in the grace and knowledge and love of Jesus Christ evident in your life.

But it begins with being born again. And if you want to have a pure courtship, you must be in touch with the only pure one that's ever lived. You will not do it in your own strength because your own flesh is not strong enough.

It's not. And even your own will is not strong enough. Turn with me to Luke chapter 16.

I just feel like I need to pause and say some of these things here this morning. Luke chapter 16. Here we have the story of Lazarus, the beggar, and the rich man.

Both died, but they went to two different places. Jesus is telling this story. I'm not sure people have argued whether it's a parable or a true story.

I believe it's true because in the beginning, Jesus says, there was a certain rich man. But anyway, it's a certain truth. So in verse 25 of chapter 16 of Luke, Jesus says, But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.

But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. You cannot pass from one to the other.

Jesus is making a very strong statement about a great gulf being fixed between those that are right with God, those that are born again, those that are in the bosom of Abraham here, and those that are not. And even though you may want to go from one to the other, Jesus is saying you cannot go from one to the other. And we live in a world and a society where everything is so changeable, so unstable, so easily changed or whatever, whether it's men flying to the moon and defying gravity, whether it's submarines going to the bottom of the ocean, whether it's mountains being leveled by dynamite.

I remember growing up near Ashland. We lived in Westwood. It was the bigger town of Ashland, and you could go on this old road.

I forget what it is, 23 or Route 60 or whatever it is that goes into Ashland. And I remember I didn't go there for a long time or whatever happened. And then one day I went back, and this whole side of a mountain that used to be there was blasted away.

And it was almost shocking. It was just arrested my attention so much to think it's gone. That mountain is gone, and it will never be put back again.

I mean, this world is changeable. You can even change where a mountain is. And yet here Jesus is saying this is not changeable.

This is a great gulf, and the word fixed is used here. Dear young person, if you're here and you're not born again and you're at these meetings on courtship, I would just beg you, much more important than courtship, you don't want to stay in this fixed situation. There is something that can change it in this life.

It is changeable now. And the decision you make now can change that forever. But if you don't, there is a great gulf fixed.

You must make the decision in this life how things are going to be for you in the next life. It was too late for this rich man. That's the point of this story.

It's fixed. It's already finished. And I don't believe this rich man was an old man when he died.

I think young people like to think, well, maybe later I'll settle down and all these kind of things. I don't know how old this rich man was. I have the feeling from reading it, it was kind of a surprise that he died.

It wasn't that he was an old, old man that died in his bed asleep one night. So I just encourage you young people, I plead with you, that whenever we're looking at relationships like courtship, those kind of meetings actually demand that there is a gospel call. Because if this relationship isn't right here, why are we talking about this relationship here? So you may say, well, brother, why are you giving a bit of a gospel call this morning? Well, it demands it.

The Word of God, the principles of the Word of God and relationships actually cry out for it. And so I beg you this morning to consider that. Come to Christ, young person.

Come to Christ. Alright, another thing that I want to lay out here this morning, I think it's important that as we begin these three sessions together and the fourth one concluding on a godly Christian wedding with Mo's tomorrow afternoon, that we need to just hold up for a few minutes here this morning, may I say, the prize or the goal. You know, the goal of courtship, I often tell courting couples in my home, Lord willing, we're having a wedding this summer on July the 14th, is it? A Saturday in the middle of July.

It'll be our seventh wedding in, is it four years now? A little over four years. And so something I tell a lot of the courting couples as I'm working with them and as we're relating is the goal of courtship isn't courtship. You know, I mean, courting is nice, but in reality, it's a very short time in your life.

You know, and the goal of courting is not to court. You know, there's something bigger and better and brighter, and may I say, much, much more wonderful. You know, and that's getting married.

And so we just want to hold up this morning, just turn in Genesis for a few minutes here. It's chapter one. And we just want to remind ourselves of some simple but important truths lest we get over-focused in the wrong way here.

In verse 27 of Genesis, it is first recorded that God created man and woman, and they were together. So God created man in His own image, and in the image of God created He Him. Male and female created He them.

And it is only after He created male and female that in the very last verse of Genesis, and God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. That's the first time the phrase, very good, is used in the Bible. And the last and crowning part of God's creation was creating the man, then creating the woman, and then bringing them together.

The Bible, see, is not always in chronological order. If you go over to Genesis chapter 2, you get the curtains are pulled back and you get to kind of go back in time and see how it all happened. But see, God created man, then He created the woman, then, may I say, He created marriage.

He brought them together. And it wasn't until that final bringing of them together that He said, now it's very good. Before that, it was good.

But now it's very good. And so I would say to you, we need to keep in mind these things of what God calls very good. And the other thing that I want to show you here about marriage quickly is in chapter 2, verse 18.

When we get to go back in time, now we're back before chapter 1 in time, chronologically that is. And watch what happens here, what the Bible says in verse 18 of chapter 2. And the Lord God said, it is not good. Okay? It was very good after it all came together.

But watch this. It is not good that the man should be what? Alone. I will make him and help me for him.

And so, we could say by looking at this very carefully, that one of the important reasons that God, may I say, created marriage, created this whole thing of coming together of man and woman, is so that man would not be alone, but let's say it another way, so that there would be companionship. God created man to have a companion, to have a help me, to have someone to be with him. It's almost as if He didn't ever create man to be alone.

Because everything we know that God does is good. And yet, when He looked at man and said this is not good, He wasn't saying that Adam was not good. He was not saying that creation was not good.

He's saying I'm not done yet. And His aloneness, or His lack of having a companion, is not good. And then after He brings them together, and He has a life companion, God not only says it's good, He then says it's very good.

And so we need, as we look at courtship, to see this goal, this prize, this blessing that God has. You can see this repeated a little bit near the end of the Bible. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, chapter 2 of Malachi, you can see some of God's reason.

I think it's helpful for us, or it's helpful for me, to see why God does things. We're not always told always the reasons because God's ways are not our ways and His ways are above our ways. But thankfully, God knowing us, sometimes actually gives us reasons for why He does things.

And I believe it helps us understand His heart so that our heart can be more like His heart. But look in Malachi 2, verse 14, Malachi 2, verse 14, Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously. Now watch this.

Yet she is thy companion and the wife of thy covenant. There's that word. God is talking about marriage.

See, at this time, there was some treachery going on. There was some divorce. There was some horrible things going on.

And God was reminding them why marriage is important. And then in the very next verse, He gives you another very important reason, and that's to produce a godly seed. In verse 15, And did He not make one, yet He had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore, why did He make them one, that He might seek a

godly seed? And so we see two of the clear reasons for marriage.

But the first one, in order given in the Bible, is for companionship. For this not being alone. This bringing together of the man and the woman for this lifelong commitment to not deal treacherously with, but to live according to the covenant of thy wife for being together as companions, joint heirs of the grace of God together.

It's very important to God. It's one of His, may I say, heart motivations for bringing this thing together of marriage. And so it's good to hold that prize up before us.

Alright. Okay, a couple of other things that we need to cover this morning here that are both going to take a little bit more time now than some of these other points that we just needed to deal with. I think it would be right for us to look at two ways of finding a companion that are used.

Two ways of finding a companion that are used that we're going to use as contrasting, may I say, ends of the spectrum. And we're not going to hold either one of these ways up as being right, but I think it's good to look at them for a few minutes or for a little while. It'll probably take a little bit of a while to get through these because some of the things that we're going to learn there will help us to learn more about courtship and also some issues and problems that have even come into our circles over the past 10 or 11 years.

The first one that we're going to look at is betrothal at one end of the spectrum. And at the other end of the spectrum we'd have dating. Now we are not promoting, I'd make it clear again and you'll see it, we're not promoting and I'm not promoting betrothal this weekend nor dating.

But we're going to look at them for a little bit because there's some things that we need to see about both of these ways. These are two ways that are being used to find a wife or find a life companion. I want to say up front, I do not believe in practicing betrothal as it is often taught by many of the modern American homeschool teachers.

Men like Jonathan Lindvall has extensive teachings on betrothal. John Thompson. Warren Riker.

I forget all the men. There's about five or six men who have extensive, some men have even written books on it, on betrothal. And they basically go into the Old Testament and well actually, they go past the Old Testament.

They study Jewish culture very heavily and try to copy the Jewish culture of three, four, five, six thousand years ago on betrothal and come up with a system of finding a wife. Now, it's very hard to define it because each one of these teachers and I've read some of all their writings and tried to understand it and I want to be fair to them in anything that I say and yet I can say that I haven't read all of their writings but I've read quite a bit of them over the past six months thinking about these meetings. And there's a lot of very, I will say there's a lot of very good material there and a lot of good principles.

Some of them, a lot of them actually, we believe in the principles, but the applications are often very different. But if I can dare to summarize carefully here, basically, betrothal, no matter who you study and read, is a system of finding a spouse by pretty much a prearranged marriage undertaken primarily by the parents for the bringing together of two young people. And betrothal is lifted up to such a level similar to what it was in their understanding of the Jewish culture of three, four, five thousand years ago that once you are betrothed and you're in a system of betrothal that it cannot be broken and that you may never marry anyone else and that if the betrothal is broken you have to get rid of divorcement and that if you

marry anyone else you are in adultery.

And they actually teach this openly and write this in books. And so, even though, again, some of the principles behind betrothal are very good, what has happened is it is such a reaction to dating over here that the pendulum, if you can just picture a giant pendulum, and this is obviously very, very wrong, has swung way over here to saying, this is wrong, therefore, we need to go back in history and go over here. And again, I do not want to lift up betrothal because of some of the problems that I have seen with it and some of the problems even that I believe have crept into our circles by what I would call a spirit of betrothal.

And I will be giving a few specific examples on that in just a few minutes. But, again, many of the principles and the thoughts behind betrothal are right. And I am not being critical of these men necessarily for trying to come up with something because they have seen the devastation that this has caused in our society.

And we will talk more about dating later. But back to betrothal here. Some of the other characteristics that you will see in most betrothal is they would believe that there would be no romantic or emotional involvement until the wedding day and after.

I don't know what to say about that other than I just think that is foolish. I hate to say it that way, but I read these men's writings and some of these are men I know and respect in many ways, but I am thinking that is just not reality. And I don't even know how to look at it.

I looked at the Bible and first of all, there is not a lot in the Bible as far as courtship. We want to say that up front to be fair. What we have in the Bible are principles dealing with our hearts, our authorities, our God, and many of those things.

And we take those principles and we make the right applications. You are not going to find too many courtship stories. There is obviously the story of Isaac and Rebecca.

There is the story of how to do things wrong, Samson and Delilah, Shechem and Zedina. There are some of those kind of stories where people did everything wrong and we can go, wow, okay, we don't want to go that way. But there are actually very few stories as far as a detailed, you know, laid out thing to say, okay, that's courtship.

But rather, there are many, many wonderful principles in the Word of God which we can look at and say, okay, these are some applications that we want to deal with. And if we think about it, there are many other things in our Christian life which we approach the same way. Alright, so let's keep looking at this betrothal for just a few minutes.

The other thing that I saw that was consistent in betrothal is the father of the bride plays a very, very predominant role. And in effect, courts the young man and the young man courts him often for long, long extended periods of time, whether it's many, many months, even sometimes a year, sometimes longer. And their relationship is the primary relationship is between the father and the young man.

There's something again that seems very wrong with that. Because the young man is not marrying the father. Because the Bible clearly says that when he leaves, he'll start his own household.

But it's almost like they're tying such strings, I kind of wonder how will they ever be able to leave. And it just seems like it just doesn't flow or fit the heart of God in establishing a new home. So that was

something that troubled me a little bit.

The role of the father was overemphasized. Now again, during this weekend, once I start talking about the role of the father, you're going to think, Rick, I think you're overemphasizing it. I hope you don't think that.

Because the authority and the relationship of the father in a courtship is important. And it's a blessing. But when it's overdone, it's like anything.

It gets out of balance. And it just doesn't seem to work out right. And then this whole thing of betrothal, I don't, it just doesn't, it doesn't flow to me with the heart of God and the way these things are supposed to be worked out.

Then the other thing I noticed in this studies on betrothal is once the young man finally gets the consent of the father, basically he just announces it to the girl and she accepts it and is fully expected to marry the young man without really, you know, the benefit of much knowledge, if any knowledge about him. I don't think that's right. And may I say, not even biblical because we can look at several verses that specifically talk about the woman's ability to say no and her will involved in the marriage choice.

Again, I believe very, very, very much in parental authority and we will spend much time on this subject. But again, I fear the pendulum on this betrothal has swung way over here in this thing. And so, you know, we want to kind of find our way with courtship and right relationships rather than reacting to dating.

And again, there is something in all of us as we see the world that's dating to react. To go, ugh, that's wrong. And it is wrong.

But, we need to find our way here. And again, the reason that I'm taking the time to go over this is I believe there is or has been at times in certain situations a bit of a spirit of betrothal in our circles where fathers have gotten over-involved. I know of a number of cases personally where I've been called to be involved in where the father has had the young man spend again months and months and months and months sometimes even a year or more courting the father.

And I know of even several cases where it's been up to a year where then the father actually didn't say, you know, no, go away. And by then, the young man had invested almost a year of his life. The hurt, the brokenheartedness of that whole thing, it just, all in the name of, you know, protecting his daughter.

But, the boy was a real person too. You know, it's just not right. And there is a bit of that out there in some of our circles.

This lifting up of the girl to such a level of being a precious jewel that it's kind of like something's wrong here. Because, what does the New Testament say in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 about the woman is made for what? The man. Now, I don't say that to lower the women.

I just say that to balance some of the spirit of betrothal. You know, it's almost as if she is such the prize and he's the dog and he dare not come around and the father puts him through the mill and on and on and on. Well, if he's that bad that you have to put him through the mill, you should have told him no the first week rather than put him through that.

I mean, let's be Christian about this. Okay? Come on, fathers. You know, there is a bit of a spirit of betrothal.

May I say, I'm just using this phrase betrothal to talk about this swing of the pendulum. That's off. It's not even Christian I don't think.

Because, would you want to be treated that way? I mean, let's just be honest. Let's be real. Is the golden rule gone? You know, it's not.

It's still in my Bible. It's still there. You know, how would you want to be treated? There's something wrong.

There's something not right. And it's even, again, I'm not picking on these other teachers. I think it's, there's a bit of this in our circles.

Now, thankfully, again, thankfully, there's many beautiful courtships and there's many of you here that can testify to parents who, you know, were such a blessing and amen for all of those things. And God bless you parents who are finding your way. But I think at a time like this, it does bear a moment to stop and say these things out loud because, you know, we are who we are and we need, sometimes, a little bit of balancing, even in our own circles.

All right. Again, I want to say, let us use good sound principles and yet be flexible, realizing every situation of courtship, there are many things that are alike, but there can be things that are different. Different backgrounds, different situations, different personalities, different factors involved.

We do not want a system of courtship that, let's put it this way, do you want a system of how to get born again? Do you want it, like, when you get born again, you have to follow these 24 steps or you are not really born again? Now, again, there are very strong principles we believe in, Brother Mose. Repentance. Faith.

Counting the cost. I mean, there are principles that we believe in and they are applied, but how you come to Christ or I come to Christ or she comes to Christ, although the principles and all those things are very, very similar, the situations and the factors can be as different in nine days, many, many times and you will often wonder, that was not how it happened for me, except when you realize they are born again, then you realize, but we still have a lot in common and that is what it needs to be with courtship. It is a relational thing.

We do not want to be so pressed into this thing. Now, here is another thing that I have seen in this spirit of betrothal a little bit. Could somebody get me another glass of water that does not have ice? I have already drunk all my one that does not have ice.

Sorry, but I do not do well with ice when I am speaking. Okay, where was I? Okay. One of the other problems that I have seen again a bit in our circles, again, with this, as I am calling it, spirit of betrothal, is some have seen to develop a feeling, again, somewhat of a, let's say, mystical feeling, I am not sure, that there is only one perfect mate for them.

There is only one. And there is sort of a, there is only one teaching in our circles. I feel that's very wrong.

I feel it's very wrong. And, it's very hurtful too. You may say, well, how can that hurt anybody? Oh, I have seen it hurt young people like you wouldn't believe.

I have had them weep in my lap and weep and weep and weep. I can think of a number of cases that I have been involved in where there has been a girl that has had three, four, five, one, I can think of, I have

had eight young men all come in a six month period. Everyone declaring boldly because they had been through all the right steps, that it was the will of God, that she was the one for them.

I mean, it happens. I'm not talking about outside of our circles. I'm talking about in our circles.

Boldly declaring, I have prayed, I have fasted, my parents, my ministers, and they have their list. And, those principles are all very good. But, because they believe there is only one, they believe this is the one and they found the one and, I'll just ask you all the questions.

Are all eight of those young men right? Okay. Well, if they're not right, then is it right that there is only the one? I don't know how to say all that. You know, I'm glad for my wife and I think she's perfect for me and I want to say all those wonderful things that sound so great when you say them.

But, in reality, there's not only the one. There's not. And, what if, and this is something that I've seen happen, what if, well, let me say it another way.

Well, let me say this. In my own Christian life, outside of courtship, I believe that there is a general will of God and I do believe there is a specific will of God in certain situations. But, I also believe that if I go left a bit and God, you know, would have willed that I'd gone right, I don't lose my relationship with God.

You know, I think God just says, well, Rick, okay, I think you missed it there. But, he's still with me. He still loves me.

We still have fellowship. You know, I don't, I admit, I don't see everything right. I sometimes turn a bit left when I look back two years later and I thought, you know, I see now, in hindsight, it should have been a bit to the right.

I should have turned more that way. Does that ever happen to anybody else in your Christian life? And you have a bit of regret and you go, I didn't see that one right. I didn't call that one right.

But, you know what? I can also look back and see, God was still with me all the way. I didn't lose God's favor. And see, with this whole thing, what I've seen and caught the tears of many young people, they actually believe they've lost the favor of God.

They actually believe, some of them, I can think of two of them, actually thought, I'm not a Christian. One, I remember, I caught the tears of one young man. He fell on my lap crying.

He concluded he was not born again. And this was a very spiritual young man. But he was devastated.

Absolutely crushed. And again, I believe it's part of the spirit of the trouble because he had bought into this thing, there is the one. And he had done it all right.

And it wasn't the one. And so, zoom, his, not his world, his universe was rocked. And when I saw those things, I realized, there's some error in what I was doing.

And the problem with error, you can just say, well, that's just teaching. No, it's not. When it comes and affects your life and your son and your daughter, it's no longer teaching.

It's a heart issue. It's, it hurts. You know, when your son gets rocked to the point where he thinks, I don't even have the spirit of God.

He starts talking like that. And I mean, that's, that's dangerous stuff. And so, what we do believe is important because it will affect how we live and what we do.

So, it is important to look at these things. It is God who helps make a Christian marriage. The Bible says, what God hath joined.

The reason I don't believe there's one, is I don't believe God is limited to only joining one man and one woman. And if, if you miss it, God's going to refuse to join you. Who makes a marriage? God is part of this.

What God hath joined. God helps make the marriage. And His power is what will keep it.

Let us be careful in thinking about these things. Let us be careful thinking there is only one perfect match. Because, if we think that way, may I say, it almost sounds Calvinistic.

Are we Calvinistic quarters? You know? Do we think, believe in election and courtship? I'm sorry, I don't. I can't see it. I don't believe in election and salvation.

I don't believe in election and courtship. So let's be careful with this. And I know this morning, and maybe as this tape goes out, I know I'm running a risk with this sermon of being misunderstood.

I know that. And it's not my desire in any way to be critical of any godly man who has taught some of these things or shared some of these things. But I believe the spirit of betrothal has crept into our circles through some of these kind of things over the last 10 or 11 years.

And I've caught the tears of more than one or two or three. And it has broken my heart many times over. And I don't want to catch any more of those kind of tears.

I don't want to see young people devastated and broken. Sometimes it takes a month, sometimes years, I've seen, to recover. A few I can think of have never recovered spiritually.

Now, again, I'm not saying, you know, I'm just saying shame on them. They should have recovered. God is enough and all those things.

But this can be a very devastating thing. And so I just beg you to give me a little grace. I know I'm probably going to be misunderstood but I'm not sharing this for me this morning.

I'm sharing this for those young people, those very young people that I've seen hurt by these kinds of things. And I believe with all of my heart that we all want the same thing in our circles. We all want godly courtships, God-honoring marriages that give glory to God, that are a testimony to this world.

We want all the same thing. I believe that. Now, let's go ahead for a little bit of time here.

We were talking about the two things on the end of the spectrum here. We've talked about betrothal. But now let's just look at dating here for just a little bit.

And there's some things I think we need to look at here. I believe most of us here, I hope all of us, but I believe most of us, and I guess I'd like to believe all of us, are not in favor of dating as the term is used and practiced. Courtship is to be sharply contrasted.

I don't bring up betrothal to throw everything out that some of these people believe in. Again, there are many, many, many, many godly principles within the concept of betrothal. And I'm not swinging back to

dating.

Please do not misunderstand me. Please do not misunderstand me. Courtship is to be sharply, as we're going to present it and believe in it, contrasted Oops, I spelled that wrong, didn't I? Sorry.

Contrasted to courtship. Dating contrasted to courtship. But I have learned over the past I guess 11 plus years that I've been here that dating is not limited to people from a background like mine or remnant background or from the world.

I was actually shocked to find out that Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites, those from an Anabaptist background practiced dating. Now, they cleaned it up a little bit in some cases. And, you know, amen for that.

But overall, they date. And I was actually shocked to discover that when I moved, maybe I shouldn't have been, I don't know why, but I never lived in an area like this or had that many relationships with people from a plain background. But I was actually shocked that dating was the norm or allowed or however you want to say it.

Again, as a means of obtaining a wife or obtaining a spouse. Now, dating as it is regularly practiced today is still actually a fairly new activity in terms of world history. Dating as it is done today or even for the past 50 years, if you go back about 100 years ago, was almost unheard of anywhere in the world.

It came about after the 1920s, the Roaring Twenties, they called it in America, and right after World War I. And then it exploded after World War II. So for the last 50 years, it has been heavily practiced as women started in the workforce in World War II. The pill came about in the late 50s, early 60s.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s. And all these things, dating exploded. By the way, you know what else exploded in the 50s and 60s? Divorce.

Somebody said it. I heard it. Yeah.

Exploded exponentially at the same rate dating exploded right on its heels. Divorce. The two are directly correlation.

There's a direct line in the history of the world. You know, no dating, no divorce. They're both down here.

Dating, divorce. I mean, it's just like, it's shocking. But it's really not shocking if you think it through.

But, dating is a devastating practice. And yet a fairly new one. And we all know of its bitter fruit in life.

Dating is primarily, again, it's kind of hard to define it, but it's where a young man and a young woman are allowed by their families to be alone together for hours at a time doing various activities, basically unsupervised, where they're allowed to have more than one person they're dating, maybe even at the same time, where they're allowed different short-term relationships, you know, looking for, I guess, love or whatever it is they're looking for. And again, I'm glad that in our circles, I don't believe anyone's fooled by this very, very dangerous practice. I do believe that, well, you know what, there is a verse, actually, I want to just read before I make the next point here.

Turn with me to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4. There's a verse here I want to read. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4. OK, I want to start reading in verse 4 here of chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4,

verse 4. this is the danger of all such as we also have forewarned you and testified.

For God hath not called us not into uncleanness but into holiness. That word defraud means to promise something that you can't deliver. And dating is playing at love.

It's promising something you're not going to deliver. It's flirting with someone's emotions and toying with someone's emotions getting them attracted or aroused towards you, or attracted to you, and yet you may have no intentions of marrying them, or you may even sort of slightly think about it. Some people that date obviously do.

But, well, it didn't work out, let's move on to the next one. And so there is a defrauding that takes place in the life of that person. Again, I don't know that there's lots of examples in the Bible, but I guess, and we won't take the time to read in Judges about Samson and Delilah, but from what I can read of that story, I read it a couple times this week, my understanding of that story was that he was not married to her, he was dating her.

The Bible says that he fell in love with a woman from the Valley of Sorok, I think that's where she was from, I think that's right, in the Philistine area, and her name was Delilah. The way the story goes, it seems like he goes and visits her from time to time, and they're evidently intimate with one another, at least it alludes to that, as he's staying there with her. But it appears like he's just kind of coming and going, he doesn't really live there.

He comes around, they have a date, they have some time together, then he leaves again, then he comes back. Again, it's a very sad story in the Bible, but it does seem to have a bit of this dating aspect to it. There was a defrauding that was certainly going on from both standpoints.

But what I wanted to say to us this morning, or us to consider, is though I am so glad again that we're not here, I do have a concern that again I would call it perhaps a dating spirit, or a bit of a spirit of dating that is in our circles. And may I say even sometimes in our own church here. A dating spirit or a spirit of dating is a desire or a yearning to enjoy the excitement of romance.

To kind of flirt with it. To kind of like somebody. To have a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

And while I believe that no one here would openly say, yes, I'm for dating, I believe in their heart there is a spirit of dating. Which does dishonor their conscience, if they'll be honest with their conscience. And this desire to have a boy like them, or have a girl like them, or have a special relationship with someone in this way.

And so while no one here would ever, quote, dare officially date, because they know the ministry and their parents wouldn't approve of it, could it be there's a spirit of dating that sometimes creeps into some young people's heart in the church? I would say, I fear that it does at times. And so again we need to look at it. It's real easy to point at dating and look at the world and say, yeah, look at the world, they're dating.

That's wrong. And it is. And we don't ever want to go there.

But I think we have to look at ourselves here too and be a bit honest and say, could it be there's a spirit of dating that sometimes creeps into some of the hearts of our young people? So could it be that a young man or young woman who is committed not to date still allows a bit of their heart to become attached somehow emotionally to someone, even though it's not dating or courting? And so, you know, a young girl,

maybe she's only 13. Maybe she's 14, 15, 16, I don't know. Maybe she only gives a little part of her heart, has a little attraction for, you know, this boy, and the next year that boy, and then he's cute and whatever.

And, you know, just a bit of her heart, just a fragment kind of goes that way towards this one or that one. Until finally someday they marry. I hope that we realize that even without going out on a date, a young person can give pieces of their heart to someone else.

Do you realize that's possible? Without ever going on a date, it's possible in the spirit of dating to give away pieces of their heart to several young people during their youth. Look in 2 Corinthians. Look at 2 Corinthians for a moment here.

Chapter 11. 2 Corinthians chapter 11. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 2. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 2. Paul here says something that we need to see.

For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to, how many? One husband, that I may present you as a chaste, what? Virgin. And he's speaking of the heart here, isn't he? But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent Begali through his subtlety, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Just as a pure maiden, is his analogy here, saves not only her physical body, but her heart. I am godly over you. I am jealous of you with a godly jealousy.

So, here it's encouraging us to save our heart just for God. Does God want your heart like this? Well, I give my heart to this, and I give part of my heart to this, and part of my heart to this. No, He wants all of your heart, doesn't He? And so, in this analogy, we see that the goal is not just physical purity, but emotional purity.

That's a high ideal. I know it is. I'm not saying that young people never struggle in their heart.

I'm not unrealistic. I've raised a lot of them in my home. But here's the key.

If you have their heart, if you're walking with them, you help them through those struggles to see their wrong. They should never struggle, by the way, with your convictions. They may struggle in their hearts, because they have hearts.

They're human beings, and sometimes things catch their eye. Sometimes they make mistakes. Sometimes they're weak in a moment, and something happens that they wish they hadn't done.

That isn't the point. But the point is, where are you going? I'm not trying to preach something here that says, Oh, well, Brother Rick preached it. That means nobody's ever going to struggle again.

I know that people do struggle. Because God has so put in our hearts and in our brains that we have a desire for love that it's just kind of like bubbling in there. There is a strong desire put in men and women to get married, to have this attraction between a man and a woman.

It is a God-given desire that this thing is there. And to say that it's not there is not being realistic. That isn't the point.

The point is, what are you going to do with it? That's the point. How are you going to handle it? How are you going to walk through it? Do you want that emotionally? I know we all can all raise our hands and say

we want a physical, pure relationship before we're married. But I believe God's heart is we also have an emotional, pure life.

That our heart isn't like this. That we don't enter into marriage with having given away pieces of our heart. And again, God is wonderful.

God can heal these things and wipe these lines away. I didn't date this way, like I said earlier. Don't make me rebalance everything.

I know God can heal all those things. But again, we do need to decide and have a desire. How do we want to go? What is the way we want to walk in? And I think it's very important that we lay these things out here together.

And you need to ask yourself, young person here today. And again, I'm not just talking to somebody who's 22 years old. Maybe you're 14 years old here.

These things wake up early. You know, as we go through puberty, these kind of desires, they wake up. They do.

And the boys start noticing the girls. And the girls notice the boys. That isn't the point.

The point is, again, how do you walk through it? And what do you do with it? It is real. There are attractions. There are struggles.

Those things do happen. But if our hearts are fully given over to Christ, that is a great safety and bulwark against those things. And God can help you through those things with parents.

But let me ask you a few questions this morning, young people. Do you desire a boy-girl relationship just because it seems exciting? Do you excitedly look forward to meeting those of the opposite sex at recreational activities in the church or outside of the church or family visiting? Do you desire romantic emotions before you are ready to consider marriage? Do you desire physical affection of some type in a premarital relationship? Do you run away from or hide from or resent the thought of your father or mother initiating and being involved and overseeing your romantic relationships, your courtship? Instead, do you want freedom and privacy in these kind of relationships? You know, these are some questions you just need to ask yourself. And I guess I would fear that if you would answer yes to any of those, if you are going to be honest this morning, then you do have a spirit of dating.

You know, if you're hiding, if you're doing things in secret, the answer is you know it isn't right and you have the spirit of dating. And I would ask you this morning that you need to repent and you need to consider your ways. Dating is an exercise in pleasing yourself.

That is one of the fundamental root issues with dating. Dating is an exercise. It's the Samson mentality.

She pleaseth me well. I just, I like the way she looks. I like this.

I want to do this. It's an exercise in pleasing yourself. Dating doesn't train you for marriage.

It prepares you for having more than one relationship with someone of the opposite sex. And that's why when the dating thing spiked up in American history, the divorce was right on its heels. Because the people were trained how to have more than one relationship with someone of the opposite sex.

And they got, the sad thing was they got trained too well. Too well. It works too well.

Dating did what it was supposed to do. It trained them in a certain type of behavior. The sad thing is it worked only too well.

And it's a shameful practice that makes provision for the flesh. One of the other key problems with dating is it removes, by definition, authority from the formula. You know, in the world, you don't ask your dad who you're going to date.

You know, whether you're a boy or a girl. You just get asked on a date by somebody and you go. And again, in that spirit of dating that may even be in our circles, do you ask mom and dad, hey, is it okay if I just sort of start liking so and so? That doesn't happen, does it? Young people.

You do it. But you do it in hiding. Because you're removing authority.

And I can just tell you because it's true. When you remove authority from the formula of your life, you are headed for trouble. It will not turn out the way you think.

Oh, it feels exciting and you get all, you know, these things and sparkles and all this you think are in your eyes. But it is a very hurtful, dangerous game. You are playing at something you have no idea what you're playing with.

And it will not turn out the way you think. It is defrauding. Girls attracting others through your eyes, your walk, your dress is the spirit of dating.

Because it's defrauding. And if you're practicing any of those things here, I beg you to put yourselves back under your parents' loving authority. And find your way.

Because it's not going to turn out right. Boys, treat every young lady the way you would want men presently to be treating the young lady you may someday marry. You need to put things in the right perspective of what you're doing here.

When you are tempted to flirt, put that thing away. Pray that God would fill your life with His presence. And pray for your future spouse, if you must pray in that area.

I think that's okay to pray for your future spouse. My wife was not a Christian. But she told me after we were married that her mother taught her at a young age to pray every day for her future spouse.

And she prayed every day for me, even though she didn't know me. And I believe that's one of the reasons I got born again. I got born again before she did.

And I believe some of that was God honoring some of those prayers. That we can pray for those kind of things. Again, I believe we all want the same thing.

I don't share these things this morning because I'm after anybody or one of those things. But I think if we're going to look at godly courtships, and we're going to lift them up, we need to deal with the hard issues of where we're really at. And we need to lay these right foundations.

And be honest and acknowledge that we do have some of these feelings. We do have some of these attractions. And then again, what are we going to do with them? And how are we going to channel these

things in the right way? And if I could sum it up here at the end with a couple of thoughts, it would be this.

Marriage, therefore, and courtship, young people and adults, we can all hear this, is not so much about finding the right kind of person. It's about becoming the right kind of person, isn't it? Marriage is not so much about finding the right kind of person as it is becoming the right kind of person. And the only way to become the right kind of person is your walk with Jesus Christ.

You can't do it because you go to Effort at Christian Fellowship. You can do it in Christ. You can become the right kind of person that God wants you to be in Jesus Christ.

And a walk with Him is the best way to keep your heart pure and clear and clean and right from these type of entanglements. And even if you fall and struggle, He is the best way to pick you back up and put you back where you need and want to be. And may I say, a right walk with Jesus Christ is the best preparation for courtship.

Lots of times people ask, what's the best preparation for courtship? Serve Jesus Christ with all your heart. There's no better training than that in anything in all the world. Well, I think this morning I will stop there with this first message on preparing for courtship.

And why don't we stand to our feet and just ask God to bless the message. And then after I pray, Jeremy and Davina are going to come and share some testimonies with us about courtship. They may be covering a few of the things in a way in their testimonies or at least somewhat in their testimony that they're going to share.

And then after that we'll, Lord willing, time permitting, have a few questions. I guess we're planning on lunch at noon, Moe's. Is that right? Okay, so let's just pray here.

Thank You, Father. We bless You. We love You.

We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your principles and Your ways. And I just pray that You would use these things that are shared here this morning, that people could see them rightly and understand, Father.

And bless us, Father, with a right heart towards Jesus Christ. Bless us with a right spirit that we would have a spirit of courtship, a spirit of wanting to walk pure emotionally and physically with Jesus Christ and with one another here. Bless the parents and the dear young people to draw together and to learn how to walk together as that is another great, great strength in this whole time of preparing for courtship.

And courtship is a right relationship between parents and godly authorities. Thank You for this time now. Bless Jeremy and Devina as they share.

Give them freedom, Father. Thank You. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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