

# (Sex, Love & Marriage) 7. for Girls Only

by Zac Poonen

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*A sermon on the importance of modesty, relationships with men, and preparation for marriage, emphasizing the unique calling of a woman to represent God in her life and relationships.*

**Topics:** "Christian Womanhood", "Marriage Counseling"

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## Description

Dr. Annie Poonen emphasizes the unique and valuable role of women as ordained by God, highlighting their capacity for love, sensitivity, and intuition. She discusses the importance of modesty in dress, emphasizing inner beauty over outward appearance. Dr. Poonen also provides guidance on relationships with men, the significance of marriage, and the qualities to look for in a prospective husband. Additionally, she addresses the challenges and blessings of remaining single, encouraging women to find fulfillment in serving the Lord undistractedly.

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## Transcript

(This chapter has been written by Dr. Annie Poonen, MBBS.)

She is far more precious than jewels, and her value is far above rubies or pearls."

Thus does the Bible describe the virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:10).

Pagan culture has always looked down upon woman as a lower level of creation than man. But the Lord Jesus Christ clearly taught, both by precept and by example, that woman's position as ordained by God, was by man's side and not under his feet.

Woman was created by God to fulfil a unique function - one that man could never fulfil. And so, a woman is made differently from a man, not only physically, but mentally and emotionally too. Because of the demands of motherhood, her constitution is such that she is more sensitive, more subjective and more emotional than man. Hence she has a greater capacity to love and at the same time a greater longing to be loved. Without these she would normally feel starved. She is also called upon to be more versatile than man, because of the peculiar functions that she has to fulfil. She is therefore gifted with a sharper intuition-although men may not acknowledge this readily!

G. Campbell Morgan has said in 'Studies in the Prophecy of Jeremiah', referring to the responsibility that rests upon womanhood:

"It is for women to realise that in them is perfected, for manifestation in the cosmos, the image and the likeness of God; that when God said....'Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our likeness,' it is also recorded that He made man in His likeness and after His image, 'male and female created He them.' I know the difficulty of stating this and yet it is one of the most profound truths in the Bible if we are to understand God, and if we are to understand humanity, that in womanhood we have a revelation of that in God which does not find expression in man....There is given to her, as a separate and sacred responsibility, that into which no man can ever enter for the unveiling of profound truth concerning God....

"What is it? How shall I express it other than by saying that not only is it true that God is a Father, it is also true that God is a Mother? If the great doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is taught in the Bible, quite clearly also, and quite as clearly, the doctrine of the Motherhood of God is taught in the Bible (cf. Isaiah 66:13; Matthew 23:37). In womanhood it is intended that there shall be the unveiling of those mystic and mysterious depths of tenderness, which are of the very essence of eternal strength, which can best be understood by such mortals as we are, by the holy and sacred mystery and wonder and power of motherhood.

"I am not referring merely to the actuality of motherhood, for there are women who have never been in any actual sense mothers, who nevertheless are exercising all the mother function of tenderness and care and strength that covers and guards and heals and helps. It is that strong quality, strong with the delicate weaving of infinite tenderness and gentleness and beauty, which is the supreme glory of womanhood. May God deliver us from a day when anything rough-and-tumble shall spoil the finer delicacies of womanhood. It is in all these things that she is to represent God. In that side of His nature that defies human words, of which we can only speak as motherhood - and mothers will be the first to admit that it is a rough venture, this, to express the finer facts concerning God - God is to find expression in womanhood."

Such is the calling of a woman! The peculiar qualities which God has bestowed on her can be greatly used for His glory and for the good of others, if she is truly dedicated to Him. But the very same qualities can be misused or wasted if she does not seek godliness in every area of her life. May God help us to recognise that through the tenderness and charm which are His special gifts to woman, He expects us to add beauty to the common things of life, and thereby to be a blessing to those around.

A woman has sexual instincts too. Unlike man's, hers is more passive and therefore much more easily controlled. Such instincts, though, are quite natural and a woman would be abnormal if she did not have them. A woman longs to receive attention and love. She longs more than any man ever does, to have a home and a family of her own. Such longings are in reality a preparation for motherhood. This is a healthy thing, for God Himself has made us thus. Because of such longings it is natural for a girl to feel attracted towards a man with the intention of marriage. Men may feel attracted towards girls merely for physical intimacy. But girls normally seek marriage alone in any attraction towards the opposite sex. There are rare exceptions where girls seek to be friendly with boys merely for the purpose of flirting. But this is abnormal. At the other extreme, there are a few cases where girls feel no attraction whatsoever towards the opposite sex but on the contrary feel drawn exclusively and inordinately to their own sex alone. This too is abnormal and unhealthy, and is often a symptom of homosexuality.

### Modesty in Dress

The Bible warns young women, "Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on jewellery, or beautiful clothes, or hair arrangement. Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a

gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. That kind of deep beauty was seen in the saintly women of old" (1 Peter 3:3-5 - TLB).

Woman has within her the power to attract the opposite sex. This is a God-given power but it can be, and often is, dreadfully abused. If this power is not kept under the control of the Holy Spirit, a girl is treading on dangerous ground. Girls, as they grow up, become aware of this ability within them, and are tempted to do everything possible in order to enhance it. The result is an increasing use of "make-up," an increasing exposure of the body (through the latest fashions in clothes) and an increasing amount of time spent in arranging the hair. The Bible says that "Christian women should be noticed for being kind and good, not for the way they fix their hair or because of their jewels or fancy clothes" (1 Timothy 2:9-10 - TLB). Here, as in the verse quoted earlier, real beauty is defined for us by God.

Our bodies are a sacred trust given us by God and we cannot abuse them. We are commanded to glorify God in our bodies. This would refer not only to bodily habits but also to the type of dress that we wear on our bodies. In the Old Testament, God condemned the daughters of Zion for abusing, by various means, this power of attracting the opposite sex (read Isaiah 3:16-24).

Clothes are often an advertisement of what we really are within: they reveal our personality to some extent. Other people obtain their first impression of us usually by the clothes they see us in. Our witness for Christ can therefore be nullified if we follow the fashions of the world in our dress, for others will certainly notice what we are wearing. They may not perhaps tell us all that they observe, but they will surely laugh inwardly when we tell them that Christ has delivered us from this evil world!. So we should be careful about our dress.

I do not mean that we should be shabbily dressed. No. We should make every effort to be neat and even attractive, for God does not want us to be either dirty or repulsive. A.B. Simpson has said that a believer's dress should be characterised by simplicity and decency, so that others fail to observe anything special in it, and the wearer herself forgets what she is wearing. This is a good rule to follow.

Our manner of dress should in any case never be such that it provokes men to lust. If men are going to be judged by God for lusting, I think it is only logical that God will judge those girls, too, who dressed in such a manner as to cause them to lust.

One other thing I must mention here is regarding the use of the pottu (or tilak) - the dot on the forehead. It is sad indeed to see an increasing number of Christian girls, these days, adopting this non-Christian practice. It is therefore a bad testimony for a Christian girl to wear such a mark, for it identifies her as a non-Christian (even though she may not realise this). It is not a mere mark of fashion, as some would have us believe.

May God give us the courage to stand against all worldly trends and fashions that would hinder our Christian witness and testimony.

Why did God choose Rebekah for the high privilege of being the wife of Isaac (who was the inheritor of the promises made to Abraham)? Or why was Mary chosen to be the mother of the Lord Jesus? Surely it must have been because they had that inner beauty of heart and pleased God. True beauty is inward, not outward - and it cannot be purchased at any cosmetic shop (Proverbs 31:30)! No wonder the Bible says that an unspiritual woman with physical beauty is like a pig with a golden ring in its nose (Proverbs 11:22). What strong language! But it gives us an idea of true values.

I am sure many girls are missing God's highest by following the fashions of this world.

## Relationships with Men

Whether you like it or not, you are sooner or later going to find boys being interested in you. They may be from your college, your church or your neighbourhood. You won't be able to avoid this. So it is essential that you know how to behave with them.

Since the subject of relationships between the sexes has already been dealt with in Chapter Two, I shall not repeat here what has been said there. But I would like to mention a few things that girls especially need to take note of.

Girls, nowadays, marry at a later age than their sisters did in the past, since more and more are now going in for higher education. It is during these years spent in acquiring a degree or some training, when they are thrown alongside young men, that girls are exposed to many temptations. They are tempted to gain the attention of men by using their power to attract them without any serious intention of marriage; and this temptation, if yielded to, can finally lead to calamity.

Girls must recognise that emotions have a more lasting influence on them than on men. It may be easy for a young man to fall in love with a girl, and as easily to forget her. He may then repeat the same thing with another girl without suffering much damage to his emotional life. This is because the aim of most young men is merely physical contact, to whatever extent the girl permits. His affections may not be involved at all, whereas a girl becomes emotionally involved in such a relationship. For the girl to disentangle herself emotionally from a boy she once loved is very difficult, and some women have found this to be so even after marriage - a fact which has made their married life unhappy. So there is a real need for caution.

You must not forget that the temptations that come to you through the sense of touch will be very strong. So you should not permit any boy to hold your hand - much less to kiss you. Once these things are permitted, it will be very difficult for you to hold back vain imaginings from your mind - and then one step can easily lead to another.

You must also bear in mind, that if a friendship between you and a boy breaks up, you will have to pay a much heavier price than the boy. It will be easy for him to leave you and to get married to somebody else. But it won't be so easy for you. You will bear a stigma ever afterwards, and as a result, you will find it extremely difficult to get a partner later on. This is especially true in India. I am not referring here only to those who have indulged in dating and petting. Those who have had a clean love-relationship with a boy (even if it be only through correspondence) will suffer likewise, if their relationship (or even the fact of their correspondence) is known to others. Girls must not forget their vulnerability here.

Not a few girls have suffered thus and lost their reputation, because they were not cautious in the beginning. Such a thing has not only ruined their own testimony, but brought great reproach upon the Lord's Name as well. It is not without reason that the Bible refers to us as the weaker sex, and as being more prone to deception than men (1 Peter 3:7; 1 Timothy 2:14).

Let me give you another reason why you should not get too friendly with any boy until you can consider marriage in the immediate future. The unmarried years of your life are the only years when you can serve the Lord freely and undistractedly. After you are married you will no longer be the mistress of your own time. If the pre-marital years are wasted in dreaming about boyfriends, a vital portion of your life will be lost

that could have been spent usefully for God. Don't allow the Devil to lead you astray.

I would pass on two more pieces of advice on this subject. First, never go to an unmarried man for advice on spiritual matters. Go instead to another woman or to a much older married man. Second, never be friendly with any married man (even on casual terms) without at the same time being equally friendly with his wife.

## Marriage

Almost all mothers will agree that in marriage and motherhood, they experience a sense of fulfilment and of completeness which they never had in their unmarried days. I am not saying that those who are called of God to remain unmarried miss fulfilment. A Christian girl should find satisfaction in doing the will of God - whether she is married or unmarried. And in such obedience to God a single girl too can find fulfilment. Yet it is exceptional for a woman to be called to a single life. Woman has been made by God to be primarily a wife and a mother.

No girl need feel that marriage will limit her Christian ministry. It may limit her activity but not necessarily her spiritual ministry. A girl who has been actively engaged in Christian work does find that after marriage her independent activities are restricted and her freedom of movement curbed to a large extent. A man does not face this in marriage but a girl does. She must recognise therefore that God has a different form of ministry for her after marriage. If she is to be free from frustration and disappointment, she must be willing to accept this. Her prime calling after marriage will be as the home-maker. She should make her home a refuge for many storm-tossed young people (and older ones too) and she should bring up her children in the fear of the Lord. These form as important a ministry as any that she could have had in her unmarried days.

As somebody has said, "The woman who is happy in her marriage and who has accepted its full implications, its demands upon time and energy, and the limitations of her freedom, will have a great deal to give others. From her experience of her own home life and the greater sensitivity to other people which married love usually brings, she can create an atmosphere in which friendship naturally grows."

Susannah Wesley was no preacher, but she was a godly mother and she brought up her many children in the fear of God. Two of her sons, John and Charles, grew up to be mighty instruments in God's Hands for bringing revival to England. That saintly mother thus did more for her country than she could ever have accomplished as a single woman.

As a preparation for marriage, every girl should read and meditate on Proverbs 31:10-31 frequently. There we are given a description of the ideal wife. The fear of the Lord is the secret of her whole life (verse 30). But the foundations for such wifedom are laid long before marriage. So this passage should be a challenge to every Christian girl. Everything stated there is so clear as to need no word of explanation whatsoever. One of the good qualities mentioned is "thrift." The ideal wife is one who is careful about the way she spends her money. This is a habit that every girl should develop. Many girls in colleges today are spendthrifts. If you practise thrift now, you will find it a great help later on when you get married. Your present experience will help you then.

Sacrifice is another thing that all girls must learn as a preparation for marriage. There can be no happy marriage without sacrifice. This is especially true for the girl. She will be called upon to sacrifice more than the man, after marriage. She will have to give up many of the rights she had as a single girl. If you do not

learn the meaning of sacrifice now before you are married, you will find it extremely difficult later on. So ask God to teach you this.

The most important preparation for marriage that a young girl should make is, undoubtedly, prayer. I would suggest that during the two or three years immediately preceding the time when marriage is likely to be contemplated, every Christian girl should pray earnestly and regularly about her life-partner. She should pray that God will lead her to marry the person of His choice. She should ask God to bring every other proposal to nought. In India, this is all the more necessary, since parents have such a large say in the marriage of their children - especially of their daughters. A girl should therefore pray that God will direct her parents too in this matter - even if they are unsaved. Those who continue to ask God in faith will find marvellous answers to their prayers.

One other practical suggestion as a preparation for marriage: learn some cooking now, whenever you find the time. It will save you from many difficulties and embarrassments when you are married!

#### What to Look For

What should a girl look for in her prospective husband? The important points have already been mentioned in Chapter Five. I only wish to add and reiterate a few things that girls should bear in mind.

A girl needs a partner who will give her protection and a sense of security - one who can help her, comfort her and understand her to some extent. He should be one who is strong and mature enough for her to lean on, yet one who does not give her an inferiority complex. God created woman to be dependent on the man. So the person you consider should be one who inspires confidence in you, and one on whom you feel you can truly depend.

The Bible says that

the wife must see to it that she deeply respects her husband - obeying, praising and honouring him (Ephesians 5:33 - TLB).

Love grows out of respect, and if a wife does not respect her husband, it will be impossible for her to love him - except perhaps out of pity. A wife will not be able to treat her husband as her head if she does not respect him as being more mature than she. So you must ask yourself when considering a person, whether you respect and admire him enough to make you look up to him for the rest of your life. Such admiration can solve many a problem in married life.

I realise that it will not be possible to ascertain all about a person's nature with accuracy. But what has been said above and in Chapter Five, should provide you with some guidelines at least for finding the one God has chosen for you. In any case, don't ever marry a man about whom you know little or nothing - as many girls in our country often do! Marriage is for life, and is irrevocable, and it cannot be entered into lightly.

You may perhaps wonder what to do if your parents suggest an unbeliever or one unsuited in other ways. I realise that it is more difficult for a girl than for a boy, to say "No" to parents in such circumstances. Yet it is essential that you firmly but lovingly stand for your convictions. God will honour you if you do so. Satan may tempt you with thoughts of insecurity in the future and thus urge you to consent to an unspiritual match. But don't listen to him. No one has ever yet lost out by obeying God. So there is no need to fear. If you honour the Lord and depend on Him, He won't let you down. He will give you His very best, in His

appointed time. You don't want to miss that, do you?

The question of dowry has already been discussed. Let me add this further word here, that a Christian girl should think twice before she marries anyone who asks for a dowry. He may possibly be more interested in the money than in you. At the same time, don't be attracted to someone just because of his riches or his position. Money is no substitute for love, as the Bible reminds us (Song of Solomon 8:7).

### The Girl Who Stays Single

This chapter will not be complete without a word to those girls who remain single.

In Indian society, it is rare indeed for a girl to deliberately choose to be single. Such a life should be chosen only where there is the clear leading of God - for the consciousness of such a call alone can hold you in times of testing. For some, this may be only a temporary calling to be free from domestic entanglement for a few years when God may call them to some special service. Later He may lead into marriage.

There may be others reading this, who perhaps have had the single life thrust upon them against their own choice. How difficult it must be for you not to feel resentment at the family, the man or the circumstances that seem responsible for your plight. How difficult too not to feel sorry for yourself when all your natural, womanly longings cry out for someone of your own to love and to be loved by. And yet, however unjustly you may have been treated, resentment and self-pity are always wrong - and unhealthy too, in their effects upon personality. They must be confessed and forsaken. Once these ugly things have been purged away and your fellowship with God restored, you can humbly trust in His sovereignty for past, present and future. He is well able to miraculously change your circumstances. But if He does not do so, you can be sure that He has something higher for you in the calling He keeps you in. The rich supply of His grace will be your never-failing portion and you will find that it more than makes up for your every lack (See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

You do not have to live envying your married sister. She undoubtedly has certain privileges that you don't have. But don't forget that you have some privileges that she does not possess. 1 Corinthians 7:34 indicates that you can serve the Lord more undistractedly than she can. There are many fields in which you can occupy yourself fruitfully - for instance, in ministry to children and to young people. You will also be able to offer the rich gift of sympathetic friendship - as a result of your own experience - to others who have been hit hard in life's battles.

Still there will be testing, as there is for everyone, in one way or another. Given a woman's sensitive and emotional make-up, this is one of the Devil's easiest lines of attack.

But God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried beyond your ability and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out that you may be capable and strong, patiently to bear up under it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

An unshakable faith in the love, sovereignty and faithfulness of God is a shield that can quench all the fiery darts of Satan (Ephesians 6:16).

There will be no need to give way to the bitterness and the turning-in upon oneself to which many unmarried women fall prey in middle life. By developing a spirit of devotion to the Lord, by glad acceptance

of all His ways, and by practising the habit of gratitude to God and to man for the smallest of mercies received, your life can be filled with the joy of the Lord constantly, and overflow in blessing to many.

There are many cases of single women who fulfilled a most remarkable ministry in the Church. Pandita Ramabai (a widow), who founded the Mukti Mission at Kedgaon (Central India), is an outstanding example. Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur, one of the saintliest missionaries that ever came to India, is another. The streams of blessing that began to flow from their lives continue even today, long after their home-call. And they are just two among many.

The important thing really, is to know God's calling for your life, and to joyfully fulfil it, whatever it be - for therein lies peace.

#### His Strength for Our Weakness

Finally, let the consciousness that we are the weaker sex make us cling closer to Him Who has said, "My power shows up best in weak people" (2 Corinthians 12:9 - TLB). Don't forget that God made woman to fulfil a specific function. May that be fully fulfilled in your life.

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