

# A Marrying Kind of Man

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**Bible Text:** Ruth 4:1-6  
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One of the best ways that we can praise the Lord is by opening his word and studying it together. What better way to give honor to our God and to our Redeemer than to open reverently his word and to listen to it with hearts that are pledged to obedience and to worship and to a faithful response; that's what we want to do here this evening as we open the book of Ruth once more. We're coming toward the end of the book of Ruth. I had thought for a time that I might finish Ruth tonight and instead I think we'll probably go another couple of weeks after this one even because I didn't want to rush through chapter 4. There were too many things that I wanted to say out of this text.

So for tonight, we're going to look at chapter 4, verses 1 through 6. Let me read those and we're kind of treating half of a narrative that should really be treated in one message but I just couldn't bring myself to rush through it like that. Chapter 4, verse 1. You'll remember that Boaz and Ruth have openly expressed their desire for marriage to one another in Ruth 3, and now as we turn the corner into Ruth 4, we're going to see the outcome of that and there are many things that I want to glean from this final chapter for you, and so we're just going to take a look at the first 6 verses tonight and let the Lord use those in our lives. Chapter 4, verse 1,

1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. 2 He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem it." 5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance." 6 The closest relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it."

In this text, we see that Boaz is the marrying kind of man. He is a man fit for marriage. What I want to do is look at the narrative that we just read and kind of walk through it and then draw some application about marriage and preparation for marriage and what you, as a man, a young man, what you should aspire after in order to be properly prepared for marriage, and what you as a single woman should be thinking about when it comes to a husband. There are many, many things that we can learn from the life of Boaz. And for the rest of us, those of us that are married, there is plenty for us to see here, not only in terms of our own character but coming together as a church whether we're desiring marriage or not, whether you're single and you desire it or you don't, that's okay, but coming together as a church and saying these are the things that corporately we should hold up; these are the things that we should reinforce in the lives and in conversations with our young people, with our children, saying this is what you should aim after in marriage; this is the kind of person either that you should become or this is the kind of person that you should look for in marriage. Boaz gives us a wonderful example to see and to look at.

Now, with that in mind, just a little bit of reminder of what was going on in Ruth 3, you remember that Ruth had gone in at Naomi's suggestion and laid down at Boaz's feet and essentially said, "Cover me with the protection of marriage," and Boaz said, "I will do that. As the Lord lives, I will marry you except it's not completely under my control. I have to defer to the closer relative who has a right of redemption over you and I can't act until I know what he wants to do." So as you look at the end of chapter 3, verse 18, Naomi said to Ruth, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out for the man will not rest until he has settled it today." So as we come to the conclusion of Ruth 3, we're kind of sitting breathlessly waiting to see how this unfolds. The plot has not yet been resolved; there is still a tension in place. Ruth and Boaz want to get married but someone else has a claim on her that must be resolved and Boaz is now going to act in chapter 4 in order to bring resolution to the situation.

So let's look at verse 1 again and we'll just walk through the narrative together. "Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by." This was the man who had the right of redemption. He was the kinsman redeemer in the closest sense to the family. And so Boaz called out to him and said, "'Turn aside, friend, sit down here.' And he turned aside and sat down." And there is this big meeting that is about to take place at the gate. The gate was the entrance way to the city and it was at the gate where legal and commercial transactions would be conducted; the cities weren't open like we're used to, it was very close quarters and so at the gate is where people would go in and out and business would be transacted there as opposed to a courtyard square like they used to have in some of the older designs of cities. And what happens here, what we see unfolding in verses 1 and 2, there is an element of formality that is going on here. There are legal issues at stake and legal rights and property rights that are being conducted. This wasn't simply a matter of romance between Boaz and Ruth, there were legal responsibilities, legal privileges that belong to this closer relative that had to be resolved and disposed of before a marriage could take place. So there is a formality to this that you might not sense on the first reading.

So as we go along in the text, we see the close relative pass by. It's interesting that the text does not give his name. Apparently it's not important. Many commentators believe that the omission of his name was a way to diminish him in the text because he did not fulfill his responsibility as the kinsman redeemer. I don't know if that's really necessary to see but one thing we can say for sure is that the name of this man is not important; he's simply a passing figure who appears for just a moment and then passes away as God works out his eternal purposes through the life of Boaz and Ruth. And what follows after verse 1, adds to the legal ceremony, the legal formality of the occasion.

Look at verse 2, Boaz "took ten men of the elders of the city and said, 'Sit down here.' So they sat down." Now, these elders were leading men of the city that had a certain measure of responsibility as city representatives, and official business would be transacted through them. You can see this if you look over at verse 9 when Boaz speaks to them later. They are serving as witnesses to the transaction that is about to take place. In verse 9, "Boaz said to the elders and all the people, 'You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech.'" We're getting ahead of the story there just long enough to see that these men aren't simply gathering around as friends, they are serving a formal function in what is about to happen.

Now, we don't have any biblical or historical record that requires this number of people to be a witness to the transaction. There is obviously some kind of local custom, some kind of local situation that's being played out here and these men are being called as formal witnesses, much in the same way that we might in a wedding situation, we have witnesses that sign the marriage license or you have witnesses that sign a document that has a particular legal import. There is a similar situation going on here and Boaz is about to deal with a legal matter and so he sets it up in a legal way as he talks with his closer relative.

Now with the relative in place, with the required witnesses in place, Boaz gets down to business in verse 3. "Then he said to the closest relative," look at verse 3 with me, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech." Now, in some manner, Boaz is informing this closer relative about the situation; maybe he's simply stating the matter so that it can be put into issue in front of the witnesses for formality, but nothing in the book prior to this time has said anything about Naomi selling land that had belonged to Elimelech, this is the first time that we are introduced to it here in the text. But if you think about it, it makes perfect sense that Naomi would be selling land, after all, she is a widow; she's got a life expectancy ahead of her and she needs some manner of income, some manner of resources in order to sustain herself going forward because there are no men in her life anymore. So she's selling the land in order to support herself and to fund her living expenses which she anticipates in the future. So Boaz here is informing this closer relative, this unnamed relative, of what is happening and it was important and you can read parallel passages in Scripture, it was important in Israel for the land to remain in the family; that the family line and the family land would be connected and perpetuated throughout the generations, and so this was something of quite great importance and

that's why relatives would be called upon to purchase the land so that it wouldn't go outside of the family in a sale and then somehow be lost and the income and the perpetuation of the family name be compromised in that way.

Now, notice that as Boaz explains it here in verse 4, nothing is said about Ruth yet. He's simply dealing with it as a land and a property transaction. Look at verse 4 with me, he explains the situation in stages. He said, "I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.'" And so what he's saying is, "I'm interested in buying this land myself but you have a prior claim on it and I want to inform you of that and I want us to resolve this here. If you're going to buy it, fine, but go ahead and buy it so the situation can be resolved. But if you say you're not going to buy it, then I will buy it." So they are walking through the legal process of redemption as this is being stated. Boaz, of course, has an ulterior motive. He hasn't put all of the cards on the table yet. He hasn't mentioned Ruth yet, he is simply unfolding it stage by stage and it serves to kind of isolate what the real issue is. So what does the man say? What does the closer relative say? He said, "I will redeem it," there at the end of verse 4. So the close relative says that he wants it on the assumption that, in the context that only the land is at issue. He thinks it's just a pure business transaction and it looks like a favorable investment to him and he says, "I'll take it."

Now, at this point as we are watching this unfold and the man says that, "I'll take it," keep in pace with the unfolding of the narrative, the whole scheme of Boaz's and Ruth's marriage is at stake. If he follows through on this redemption, Ruth will go with it and she'll end up with the wrong man. This is a horrible step for just a moment in the course of the romance. Everything is at stake with what comes next in verse 5. And Boaz said, speaking honestly but also skillfully directing the conversation to the outcome that he wants, he says in verse 5, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance." Well, that changes the whole situation. "You didn't tell me there was a woman involved in the situation. You didn't tell me that there was someone that I had to marry. I thought this was just about the land."

Now, we don't have the full details, once again, of why the one who redeemed the property also had to redeem Ruth; it was Naomi's land and Naomi's property and now Ruth is brought into it. Again, our narrative doesn't explain all of the details of the property transaction that are involved there. Apparently at the death of Elimelech, the property somehow passed to Mahlon, Ruth's husband, passed to him so that Ruth was somehow included in the redemption responsibility, but the text doesn't explicitly say it to us, it is content with leaving all of the legal details on the periphery so that we don't get lost in those and see the purposes of God being advanced with what is said. And when Ruth's name comes up, the closer relative, the first and prior kinsman redeemer, backs down.

Look at verse 6, "The closest relative said, 'I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.'" Now, why would he do that? Well, he obviously didn't want to marry Ruth but he says that it would jeopardize his inheritance, and what's going on here is that if Ruth had a son to the marriage to this man, that son would get a portion of the relative's estate and the guy doesn't want to split his estate like that; he doesn't want to share it with Ruth's family; he wants to preserve the inheritance and preserve the wealth and the name in his own line and not pass it along and so if Boaz wants to do it, he can have at it. So he's looking to preserve his earthly inheritance along the way but in the meantime, Boaz embraces the responsibility and Boaz becomes the name that is perpetuated throughout biblical history and this other man falls into obscurity, but he doesn't realize that at the time and so he yields his right to Boaz and that clears the way for Boaz to marry Ruth. Now finally all of the obstacles have been removed. Now finally they can move forward in their relationship and there is nothing to prevent them from becoming married and that's what we'll see unfold in the text that we look at next week. Their budding romance can now fully bloom.

And now having seen that, I want to step back and kind of use this text for a pastoral point and to make some specific applications about men and marriage and not just speaking to single people as I said, but for us to have kind of an idea of what we can glean from the life of Boaz in thinking about marriage and in what we do here, we're going to do a bit of a short character study of Boaz and kind of review some things from the prior chapters. What can Boaz tell us about men and potential marriage? What could you single ladies learn from Boaz and aspire after in your marriage? What should single men aspire to be like? And what should ladies look for in a potential mate? This is an opportunity for us, really, I think because not only are we dealing with this in the text of Ruth, but it also comes up in the middle of our Sunday teaching on marriage with wives and husbands and so this is just providentially giving us an opportunity to look at some further issues that we want to consider and want to build up in a pastoral way. If I weren't a pastor, I might not go into this and take this little tangent, but as the pastor of the church, I feel some responsibility to say some important things about marriage and singleness and those kinds of issues and this is an opportunity for us to do so.

What I want to do is, and one of the reasons why we want to do this, is to inject some objectivity into the consideration about relationships which for most of you is coming before you're actually engaged in the relationship or you're already married, and it gives us an opportunity to think objectively about some things that sometimes would get pushed aside in the heat of emotion or a budding romance or, God forbid, manipulation from a man to a woman, and to just give you ladies especially something to think about; things for you to contemplate and to think through and to have an idea as to the kind of man, to have an idea what scripturally speaking I believe you should look for in a man that would be fit for marriage.

Now, as we say that, I'm mindful also, it helps that I have five daughters of my own that will be hearing this stuff as well, not that they haven't heard any of this before in one way or another. As I say this and as we go into these five characteristics, the parallel is

imperfect. Boaz is an older and established man in this text but he nevertheless gives us a pattern to consider as we would all seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and, once again, let me just say, realizing that some of your marriages have already been settled for a few decades, being mindful of the fact that this isn't just for individuals but this is for us corporately. These are the things that we want to be able to think about. I want you who are older to be in a position to reinforce these things to young people and so that we corporately direct them in a way that will establish them and help them find a good marriage and not be compromised in life because they made unwise decisions.

So when you ask the question whether a man is of the marrying kind, whether he's the kind of man that a Christian woman who wants to grow in grace should marry, is this kind of man fit for marriage, here are five questions that I would encourage you to ask and, as I said, in this process we'll do a short character study of Boaz in the context of how he handled his legal transaction in the verses that we just looked at.

Question 1 that you should ask as a young woman and question 1 that you should be contemplating as a young man for your own life. 1. I'm going to address these questions as if they were to the ladies themselves. You should ask this question, 1: is he godly? Is he godly? It's obvious that this narrative that we have in the book of Ruth is presenting Boaz as a godly man, as something of a picture of the greater Christ that would follow. He is affirmed and he's obviously a godly man in what is being given. Well, what can we glean from his life that would teach us and instruct us from a book that is pointing toward marriage all the way along? What can we learn from it? Well, we ask the question as we apply it here in our lives in the 21st century: is that man under your consideration godly?

Now, Christian women have no business whatsoever marrying a non-Christian man. That cannot go well. And furthermore, let me just say a couple of points on that tangent, I'm kind of on the tangent of a tangent. What would it say about a Christian woman or a Christian person willingly entering into a marriage relationship with a non-Christian man? What does that say? First of all, it communicates to that man who you say that you love that matters of salvation actually aren't that important. You have inoculated him against the Gospel when you tell him that, "I will marry you even though you do not know Christ." That can't possibly be right. That can't possibly be an expression of genuine love for that person no matter what your emotions may be. You are leading him astray and teaching him all the wrong things about spiritual life.

Secondly, what does it say about a Christian woman saying that on the one hand, supposedly saying that the glory of God is the supreme goal in her life, and yet to enter into a relationship with a man who does not share that priority? Those two things don't go together and so a Christian woman has no business marrying a non-Christian man and really has no business even entering into a serious relationship with a non-Christian man. There can be nothing good that comes out of that and the emotions that start to confuse you and you compromise and you rationalize away all of the spiritual commitments that you had in the younger days of your commitment to Christ, that nothing good can come from that. So you unmarried ladies, you young girls that are in your early teens and you're just on the front end of thinking about it, God bless you. I pray for you. I pray for

your well-being. You should just settle it in your mind right now that if you belong to Christ, the only kind of man that you're going to pursue is a Christian man. There is no other direction to go and you trust God for that. So a Christian woman has no business marrying a non-Christian man. "What partnership does light have with darkness," 2 Corinthians 6 says. That's a given.

Well, what else can we say once we cross that initial context? What else can we say? Well, you should ask the question: is he godly? It's not simply enough for a man to profess to be a Christian. That's great, that's a starting point, but that hardly settles the matter. What you want to be asking yourself as a young Christian woman looking into marriage or considering a man for possible serious relationship, is to ask yourself, "But is he godly?" I understand that he says that he's a Christian but what you want to know is: is he godly? Well, Boaz manifested godly speech and character in a way that's demonstrable.

Look at Ruth 2:4. You probably thought I had abandoned the text for the night. No, I haven't abandoned the text, that's never what we want to do at Truth Community. Ruth 2:4, notice the godliness that Boaz manifests. Chapter 2, verse 4, "Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'May the LORD be with you.' And they said to him, 'May the LORD bless you.'" Look over at verse 12 as he's now speaking to Ruth and he says to Ruth, "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." Do you see how God-centered his speech is? Do you see how earnest his dealings with those under his authority and those with a woman that he had just met, do you see how earnest and God-centered his conversation is? Do you see how he points them to Christ and points them to the Lord in the Old Testament sense, and desires blessing from God on them? Do you see the godliness that manifests itself in the way that he speaks? That's the kind of man that you want, someone that manifests a spiritual sincerity, a genuineness about his faith that is evident because the mouth speaks from that which is in the heart.

Today, ladies, you would be looking for signs, for evidence in the man's life that he has truly repented of sin and he is following Christ; that he sits under the teaching of God's word because he wants to become a man of sound doctrine. That manifests in the way that he speaks and the way that he acts. Ladies, one of the things that you must do is contemplate, think into the future, think beyond your immediate emotional attachment to this fellow and ask yourself, "Can I see him successfully doing something to lead my family and my children spiritually?" You know, the time will come when your attraction to him physically will die down a bit, the time will come when all of the emotion tamps down and then you're going to be left with who the man really is and is that man that you see, does he exhibit something that says he will be a positive spiritual influence on you and your children going forward. You must ask that question: is he godly or not because his godliness will provide a trajectory for the rest of your life and not just your life but your children's lives.

Now, so you asked the question: is he godly? I don't think that's an unreasonable question to ask. Shouldn't you want to marry a godly man? Of course you would. Secondly, here's

an important question: what do the people you trust think about him? What do the people you trust think about this man? Naomi, you will recall, endorsed Boaz to Ruth. Look at chapter 3, verse 1, actually we could go back even more in chapter 2, verse 20, "Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.' Again Naomi said to her, 'The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.'" Then in chapter 3, verse 1, she says, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight." And she sends Ruth in to Boaz to address him and to pursue the relationship.

Ladies, this is such an important point: if a man is of the marrying kind, in other words, if he is a man that is a good man for you to marry, that will be obvious not only to you, it will be obvious also to the godly people in your life who care about you and they will affirm that maybe after some conversations, maybe after some investigations, but you should desire the affirmation of the people who know you well that have proven that they care about you and that they are supportive of this man. Whether that's a godly family, if you've got godly parents to endorse that or maybe it's your church elders or someone like that, don't make important life decisions like this in isolation, or worse, in opposition to the people who have proven over their lifetime that they love and care about you and have your best interest at heart. Sometimes, sometimes those that are close to you are going to see things that are red flags or warning signs that you miss and that you're blind to in the course of your emotional attachments.

Now, one thing that I want to say here. I should probably write this in a Facebook post or something just to make the point. Months ago I sent out an email to you, the church family, and I recommended and I still recommend the book on dating and relationships by Gerald Heistand entitled "Sex, Dating and Relationships," and I endorsed that book to you and encouraged you to read it and to take it to heart and all of that, and I still like that book and I commend Gerald and his co-author for what they did and accomplished in that book. It's a very useful book, but one of the weaknesses of that book is they overlook, they say nothing about this element of getting affirmation from the people and the authorities in your life over the man that you're considering. They leave it all to the judgment of the individual couple relationship to determine whether this relationship is right or not and I think that's very unwise. I think it's very unwise, immature and dangerous for young people to exclude the people who love them the most from counsel and consideration in such a life shaping decision. So you should ask yourself: what do the people you trust think about this man? You don't have to give them an absolute right of veto in order to benefit from their perspective and to listen and to be teachable in the midst of the pursuit of your relationship.

So, we've covered two questions: is he godly; what do the people you trust think about him. Notice that Ruth when Naomi endorsed Boaz to her, she acted on the counsel; she went forward on it; she relied on the advice that Naomi was giving her. So those are two things, thirdly, what else could we ask? Thirdly we could ask this question: is he honorable? Is he honorable? Do you remember what we looked at last week? You remember that Boaz had Ruth at his feet in the dark of night, in the quiet; she was dolled



up; she was perfumed. It was no doubt a matter of temptation that was right there at his feet and what did he do with that opportunity? What did he do on that occasion? Do you know what he did? He protected her honor rather than taking advantage of an opportunity for sin.

Look at verse 8, for example. Ah, let's start at verse 7, "Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. He said, 'Who are you?'" She identified herself. Verse 13, what did he say to her? He said, "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning." He didn't touch her. There was nothing inappropriate that took place, you know that from verse 14, "she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, 'Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.'" He treated her in a way so as to preserve her purity before him and even sent her away before it became light and others saw. He was protecting her reputation along the way as well. He had her well-being at the center of the relationship and this was a man who found her attractive, you know that because he married her; you know that because he said that, "You could have gone after young men whether poor or rich," in verse 10, and yet he acted to protect her honor.

Ladies, let me say something to you right now that is just so very, very critical and I hope and trust that you know that I am on your side, that I have nothing to benefit personally from the things that I am saying to you. This is all for your well-being. This is all for your protection. Ladies, a marrying kind of man will protect your virtue in the relationship. He will not press you in physical ways that would compromise your purity. The moment he starts to do that is the moment you should cut the relationship off and run from him because if his love for you is genuine, if his interest for you is godly, his supreme desire will not be the satisfaction of his own urges but rather will be to make sure that you are protected in virtue and in reputation by your association with him. And a man who does not do that, is somebody that you should not consider to be of the marrying kind. He won't manipulate you and say, "If you loved me, you would do such and such." He won't take advantage of your affection. He will protect and preserve it. So, ladies, you need to think about that and you husbands, you dads, you need to reinforce that. You need to encourage your daughters in that direction. You need to be there as a godly, manly influence in their lives so that they are not swayed by the false affections that somebody who just wants to, you know, with them.

So, ladies, you ask the question, just step back from the relationship, step back and just ask yourself these questions objectively before you get too deep into the relationship: is he godly? You know, I mean, just little simple things. Does he gather together with the people of God on a consistent basis or does he only show up when you're there? Is his pursuit of God dependent on you being there so that the real objective is you instead of God himself, Christ himself? You don't want a man like that. What do the people you trust think about him? Ask. Talk. Have an honest conversation. And don't be defensive

about it. Don't prejudge that, "I want this to happen and then I'll look for things to justify it." No, ask it honestly and step back before you get deep into the relationship and ask: is he honorable? What's the pattern of this man's life? To ask if he's godly and ask if he's honorable is to ask overlapping questions, I know, but I'm just trying to isolate things to help you think clearly.

Fourthly, here's another question that you should ask yourself: is he kind? Is he kind? Do you know what Boaz did? Boaz sent Ruth home with a gift for Naomi. Look at chapter 3, verse 17, actually look at verse 15, Boaz said to Ruth as she's getting ready to leave, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley, "tens and tens of pounds of food," and laid it on her. Then she went into the city." And what did Naomi find? What did Ruth say to Naomi when she got home? Verse 17, Ruth said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" He cared for her mother-in-law. He sent home a generous gift for the benefit of her family.

Ladies, here's an important point for you: when you're considering a man for marriage, look beyond how he treats you. Of course he'll be nice to you. If he's after you, you can assume that he'll be nice to you. I mean, that's really kind of twisted if he's not. Why would you even go after a man like that that abuses you or speaks harshly to you? That wouldn't make any sense, would it? But, you see, what we're looking for, what we're looking for are independent ways to judge a man's character apart from the immediacy of the relationship with you. You want to know what this man is really like because it's what he's really like that's going to shape the course of your life.

So when you are considering a man for marriage, look beyond how he treats you and ask questions like this: how does he treat your family? Maybe more importantly: how does he treat people who can do absolutely nothing for him? How does he treat the clerk at the store? How does he treat the old man in the congregation who has lost his seeming usefulness? How does he treat his own family? You want to see through, you want to look past the immediacy of romance and say, "I want to know who this man really is." And it's these ways that he treats others that are going to give you a more objective, reliable indication of what he's really like and what he's really like is how he will eventually treat you once the romance dies down. I've heard horror stories of women who married men thinking they were one thing and then finding out afterwards that he wasn't, and the gloves literally came off and the abuse began. To the extent that you can avoid that beforehand by simply being discerning, we want you to do that.

Now, one final question and then we'll kind of warp these things up with some final thoughts about it. We've asked: is he godly; what do people you trust think about him; is he honorable; is he kind. Fifthly, we would ask this question: is he financially responsible? Is he financially responsible? Now, I want to be fair and not make the standard too high here. Boaz was a man of great wealth and he handled legal affairs well as we've seen. Boaz was a man of great wealth, you see that in chapter 2, verse 1, for example. And a marrying kind of man, ladies, he doesn't need to be wealthy, he doesn't need to be a man of great means, but here's the thing that you should be asking yourself

when you look at a man for potential marriage: does he have a demonstrable work ethic at least? Does he have a plan to support you? Don't make the mistake of saying, "You know, we're just going to get married. I know he doesn't have a job and he doesn't really have a plan, but God will work it out and love will keep us together." Don't deal foolishly with life that way. A responsible man, a man of the marrying kind, will at least have a work ethic and at least have a plan that he can explain on how he's going to support you.

So, ladies, trying to be really practical here, talking to you like you were my own daughters in some ways, you know what I mean by that. I'm not trying to overstep my bounds but I just care about you. Beware of the man who cannot keep a job or who never finishes a task. And especially, ladies, beware of men like that who are big God talkers; who put on a spiritual front; who like to talk about Jesus but they can never seem to get around to actually doing work or finishing tasks. Men like that will bring you misery. I've seen it. I've seen illustrations of all of the negative sides of what I'm describing to you here.

Now, with those five questions in mind, let me say this: what we're talking about here, these are principles; they're not rigid dogmatic guidelines. These are areas of inquiry to ask about, things to consider. Think about it this way: a young man or a newer Christian may still be establishing his patterns in life and that doesn't mean that he's disqualified, that doesn't mean that you wait until all of these things are perfectly established forever. Life isn't like that. After all, that man is a sinner just like you are. God is in the process of sanctifying him just like he is in you as a Christian woman. So, ladies, any man that you consider when you look at him closely enough, you'll find a blemish or two or three, but what you want to look for and hopefully we can kind of wrap this up and this will kind of pull it all together in terms of what we're saying: we're not asking a 21-year-old man to be perfectly established in life with a prosperous career and his education completed and he's ready to take off and he's already elder qualified in his life. That's not what we're saying. That would be completely unreasonable and unattainable to do that. That's not what we're saying at all. What you want to look for, ladies, parents, what you want to look for, what you want to help your children discern and think about is a word that I love to use, you want to look for trajectory. You want to look at the direction that he's going. You don't demand perfection in all of these things, that's unattainable. What you are looking for is direction. What you're looking for is the momentum, the patterns that are developing in his life. Is he developing a pattern of godliness? Does he have a pattern in his life of treating you honorably, treating other women honorably? Maybe he's failed miserably in the past but he's now working out the fruit of repentance. That's okay. It's going to be pretty hard to find a man who has never fallen in any way whatsoever. Does he have patterns of kindness?

You know, let me finish my thought and then I'll come back and say something else if I don't forget. What you want to look for is trajectory, what is his life becoming? How does he talk about his life when these matters come up, ladies? Does he excuse his past mistakes and sins? That's bad. If he minimizes it or if he kind of laughs it off, that's not good. That says that he's not treating righteousness seriously. But if he can say, "Yeah, you know, that was before I was a Christian and I hate that part of my past life." Or,

"Yeah, you know, I'm still growing in that and I'm not all that the Lord would have me to be but, oh, I want to be a godly man." And you see evidence to confirm that, that's good. Is he applying himself to growth? That's good. And so you're looking for directions in these areas, you're looking for patterns, you're looking for developing character and you can start and say, "Okay, I see these things. The trajectory is good. That gives me hope that the work that God has begun God will continue to work out in that young man's life." And if you have the affirmation of the godly people in your life, then you can say, "Okay, here's a candidate. This man is the marrying kind."

Sometimes it is little episodes, it's little things that when no one is thinking about it, that show the reality of a situation. I'm going to flip. We've been talking about men being the marrying kind. I'm contemplating doing a message on Ruth about a marrying kind of woman. Maybe I need to do that on the other side. But speaking about it from the other side, one of the things that clenched in my mind that Nancy was a woman I wanted to marry, that she was the marrying kind, was something that I know she'll remember because she remembers absolutely everything. It's true. But I remember when we were kind of in that period between friendship and engagement and it was kind of, you know, we were kind of, I don't know, nothing formal had been established yet, but there was this kid about four years old, four, five, six, it doesn't matter, and I'm just kind of watching Nancy interact. But you know what I noticed? We were just together and somehow this little kid from Africa that I barely knew was with us and his name was Mulligan, and I saw Nancy completely spontaneously, she wasn't looking at me, she wasn't trying to impress me, but she swept that little boy up in her arms and she hugged him and kissed him and smiling and laughing with him and all of that, and she just showed such natural affection and kindness to that little boy who wasn't her son, who would never be her son, who had nothing really to offer her in return. There was no obligation to be that way, and it just stood out to me. Part of the reason, I'm really getting off track here, part of the reason it stood off to me was because in the past, two, three, four years ago, I knew a girl who said, "You know, I don't like kids. I don't want to be around them." Well, in contrast to that, with that little setting and context, to see Nancy sweep up this kid and kiss on him and love him, I thought, "Do you know what? She would be a great mom someday." And just that little bit of window showed me there is godliness there. What she would become in years to come is indicated by what I see right in front of me when there was nothing to benefit from it. Ladies, that's what I'm talking about. Look for those kinds of windows, those kinds of episodes that would indicate, those spontaneous moments when no one is thinking about it that betray what a character is truly like. That's what you want to look for and when you see it, talk to the people you love and then trust the Lord to work out his providence.

What you really want to look for in our New Testament times, you want to look for somebody that's under the influence of the Apostle Paul. Look at 1 Timothy. We'll close with these verses. 1 Timothy 4. One of the benefits of being a somewhat smaller church, it gives us the opportunity to address things like this without having to worry about other things and we can just talk to each other as family sometimes. 1 Timothy 4:12. Look at what Paul says to the young man, Timothy, and the directions that he gives him for his own life and ministry. Paul says, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather

in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." Ladies, does the man that you're considering manifest that? Is he showing himself an example even in a preliminary stage of life? 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul gives a negative combined with a similar positive command. 2 Timothy 2:22, he says, "Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

Ladies, the man who is becoming like Christ can lead you to become like Christ as well. If you are a Christian young woman, your supreme desire would be that you would become like Christ, not that you would become married, that you would become like Christ. Marriage can be a great part of that. What you want is to have that defined in your mind that, "I want to be like Christ." That will exclude a lot of imposters from consideration and then you can say, "Can this man help me become more like Christ and can I exercise a godly influence on him?" If so, ladies, you've found a man of the marrying kind.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you that we can address these kinds of practical issues. We pray that you would seal them in the hearts of our young people. Of those who desire marriage and yet, Father, are still finding themselves waiting, we pray that you would give grace to them and, Father, that you would bring men like this to the ladies who want to have them. Father, we ask you to do that kind of work. We pray that you would give us grace, those of us that are married, to model and exemplify the kind of godliness that would give examples for people to follow and that you would unite us as a congregation around principles like these that there could be a whole fellowship of believers that provide a context for young men and young women to grow up in and to find, Father, the right mates going forward in their lives. Lord, help us to that end. You created marriage. It's your institution. We would seek to honor it with the way that we conduct ourselves in life. Father, I thank you that you gave me a godly woman and I thank you, Father, that for many in this room you gave godly spouses and that many people in here could testify to the wonder of your goodness in who you provided to them. Thank you for that, Father. We commit ourselves to you. We look to you for grace. And Father, we are so grateful for our Lord Jesus Christ who exemplified in perfection what the husband would look like in his sacrificial sanctifying love toward us as his people. We thank you for a Christ who gave himself up for us. Father, may our lives, men and women, each reflect the glory, the wonder of our Christ. May we rest in him and know him. Father, for those here that are not Christians yet, Lord, we pray for the work of your Spirit that would lead them to faith in Christ and the atoning blood that he shed on the cross at Calvary for their salvation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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