

PART II: COURTSHIP: THE BRIDGE FROM SINGLENESS TO MARRIAGE

I. Courtship with a believer

- a. Reminder of Courtship defined: The period in an individual's life (a) where he or she is not yet married (b) but in a purposeful relationship that is intending to seek marriage in the near future (c) with a certain believer (d) of the opposite sex, (e) and during this season is exercising Godly wisdom, discernment and prayer in discovering to the best of their ability if the two are compatible with one another where the possibility of marriage then seems to be God's will, (f) who both show indications of desire and character to live out a God-centered, Biblically-principled marriage.
- b. Review: Last session we covered "Courtship means it involve those not married and "Courtship means it involve being in a purposeful relationship."
- c. Purpose: We will see biblically for the Christian he or she should consider Christians only for courtship. In what follows we will see it in two parts: The reasoning and then the application.
 - i. Reasoning (5 Reasons)
 1. Reason #1: The Bible commands us not to have "fellowship" with unbelievers, how much more so should one not be married to unbelievers: *"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)*
 - a. Four rhetorical questions here to establish the principle in the beginning of **verse 14**: *"Do not be bound together with unbelievers."*
 - b. The most intimate way one can be *"bound together with unbelievers"* is through marriage, hence the verse does prohibit a Christian from marrying an unbeliever.
 - c. If Christians must court for the purpose of seeking someone for marriage, and a Christians cannot be married to an unbeliever, then this rule out Christians courting an unbeliever.
 - d. Notice how **verse 14** states *"for what partnership..."*; Christians cannot have an intimate partnership with someone who is lawless from God's law.
 2. Reason #2: Note whom Paul allowed a widower to marry: *"A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband ^{is} dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."* (**1 Corinthians 7:39**)
 - a. Note *"in the Lord"* refer to the sphere of those whom one wishes to be married to.
 - b. This *"in the Lord"* phrase is seen earlier in the chapter in verse 22 and the context reveals it refers to someone who is saved and a Christian.

3. Reason #3: Such a relationship with a nonbeliever will affect your character and relationship with God.
 - a. One's company (especially one's boyfriend/girlfriend) will influence who you are: *"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'"* (1 Corinthians 15:33)
 - i. Realize that nonbelievers does not accept the Biblical standard, motive and reasoning of living out a godly life.
 1. A non-Christian might do the "right thing" such as not steal or murder, but his reasoning and motive will never be a biblical one: to glorify God, and as an act of worship in light of responding to God's saving grace in their lives.
 2. His or her ethics is ultimately totally different than a Christian's (grace driven vs. works driven, act of worship vs. attempt to earn merit, God-based vs. utilitarian-based)
 - b. Remember that a lot of how we live and think is more "caught" than "taught".
 - c. Therefore, in the long run a relationship with an unbeliever will make you become more like a nonbeliever rather than you becoming more sanctified.
 - d. Illustration: I can't believe how much being in a relationship and being married can change a person. Nancy use to hate pho and Vietnamese sandwich. Now she loves it. Being in love can even change people's taste bud.
4. Reason #4: The most important part of life is your relationship with God, how sad would it be that in the most important human relationship of husband and wife, God cannot be an active part of the relationship between the two of you.
 - a. Christ is more valuable than anything else in the world: *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of ^(R)knowing ^(S)Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having ^(T)a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, ^(U)the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may ^(V)know Him and ^(W)the power of His resurrection and ^(X)the fellowship of His sufferings, being ^(Y)conformed to His death; ¹¹in order that I may ^(Z)attain to the resurrection from the dead."* (Philippians 3:7-11)

- i. According to **verse 7**, everything else that might be gained is now considered loss for the sake of Christ.
 - ii. Knowing Christ is more surpassing in value than anything else to the point everything else is like “dung” according to **verse 8**
 - b. If He is more valuable than anything else than why:
 - i. Disobey His prohibition of intimate relationship with an unbeliever (see reasoning i)?
 - ii. Break your relationship with God?
- 5. Reason #5: Glorifying God together in courtship
 - a. The Bible is clear: We are to glorify God in everything
 - i. *“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)*
 - ii. *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” (Colossians 3:17)*
 - b. If the courtship is going to glorify God and point people to the Gospel then it require the two who are courting to know the Gospel in order to reflect the Gospel and be intentional with Gospel implications.
 - c. Therefore courtship ought to be between two believers.
- ii. Practice
 - 1. Not in a relationship?
 - a. Resolve ahead of time not to compromise but to be faithful to God.
 - b. Practice obedience to God in other parts of your life (see **Luke 16:10-11**). If you are not obedient with God in the small things, what makes you think you will be faithful in the bigger things in life such as a relationship?
 - c. How does a single Christian find someone who is a Christian to court?
 - i. The Church: Marshall Segal has this good advice: *“Instead of making marriage your mission, make it God’s global cause and the advance of the gospel where you are, and look for someone pursuing the same...it’s probably best to put yourself in a community of people committed to that.”¹*
 - ii. Serving God: Don’t just merely go to church but serve and notice those alongside you!
 - 2. Interested in someone?
 - a. Find out as soon as possible if the person is a believer.
 - i. How?
 - 1. Ask!

¹ Marshall Segal, *Not Yet Married* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2017), 111.

2. Don't just ask, talk to he/she about God and the Bible!
3. Observe the person's fruit (hence the recommendation that relationship should begin slowly for discernment).
- b. If the person is not a believer, do not get in a relationship with that person and count Christ as surpassing the value of a relationship with the individual.
3. In a relationship already?
 - a. If the person is a believer, praise God!
 - i. Keep on growing in Christ together through the Word, serving God and prayer!
 - ii. But don't just stop there with merely being happy that the other person is Christian...since the person you are courting is a believer ask the following questions about your relationship:
 1. "Do the people in each of your lives know and love Jesus more because you're together?"²
 2. "Do they see God's grace and truth workin in you and your relationship as you walk through life together"³
 - b. If the person is a nonbeliever, do the right thing in the sight of the LORD, and end it as an act of obedience to God.
4. Special application note for married people ministering to singles
 - a. Share these truths with single Christians before they are in a relationship! Preventative steps are the best steps to take!
 - b. Gently remind believers the importance of these truths who are considering someone to court.
 - c. Exhort those who are in relationship with nonbelievers to obey God.
 - i. If they are ignorant, share them these truths.
 - ii. If they are struggling, share them the grace of God to motivate them to do the right thing.
 - iii. If they are disobedient, admonish them with a serious warning.

² Marshall Segal, *Not Yet Married* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2017), 114.

³ Marshall Segal, *Not Yet Married* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2017), 114.