

A Marrying Kind of Woman

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Bible Text: Ruth
Preached on: Tuesday, January 26, 2016

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We're continuing in the book of Ruth if you want to turn there, and last week we considered Boaz and made application about men and marriage. We saw what a marrying kind of man looks like. Well, as soon as you ask that question and you address that, you immediately beg the question: who is the marrying kind of woman? You can't ask one question without asking the other. So tonight, kind of an informal pastoral message, I want to pause our exposition of Ruth and use her as an example to address the issue of a marrying kind of woman, and as I do that, I want to just emphasize a couple of things as we start out. First of all, is to recognize that as we're talking about a marrying kind of man and a marrying kind of woman, that these are categories that are not mutually exclusive; they are overlapping and in some ways you could ask the same questions about both man and woman and have a very profitable discussion. So we're using the categories loosely as we talk here this evening. Also, I would say this, that really in many ways what we're talking about is what does Christian character look like. As we are focused on a marrying kind of woman, it's important to realize that you could just expand this out and say what does Christian character look like?

We're just choosing to make a particular kind of application with it here this evening in a way that I think will be fair to the text of Ruth and also edifying going forward. I'll be candid with you: part of the reason that I wanted to do this, one reason among many, sometimes there are multiple reasons that you do something, is that I just want to have this material going forward so it can be used in kind of premarital counseling situations or for parents to use with their young people to be able to have that material available before life decisions come up; to get ahead of the game. What I always hate to see happen is for people to get emotionally involved and get deep into a relationship and only then start to ask the questions about whether a marriage would be appropriate or not. That's the wrong way to approach it, to get emotionally entangled and then say, "Well, could this work out in marriage?" Once you've done that, the train has already left the station and sometimes there's too much momentum to try to put the brakes on something that should never have happened to begin with. So we're wanting to get ahead of the curve; we're wanting to prepare parents for discussions and to prepare young people for the kinds of questions that they should be asking as they consider marriage. And if you're not involved in a relationship now and you're single, this is a great time to be hearing these messages so that you can think through it beforehand and have clarity in your mind about what it is that you're looking to do with your life.

So, last time we dealt with Boaz and we asked five questions about a marrying kind of man. Unfortunately, we don't have the time to review those here this evening but those messages are online; there should be also copies of CDs in back if you want to review those. Today, as we move into our topic for tonight, let me say this and I'm making, I'm assuming the most important things which is not a smart way to preach at all, and probably I'll go back and beat my head against the wall for what I'm about to say that I'm assuming before moving into what I'm actually going to preach on. We are assuming that the woman under consideration is a Christian. For a Christian man, there is no alternative. It is not an option of obedience to even consider marrying a non-Christian woman. We are only to marry in the Lord. So we are assuming that the woman under consideration is a clear professing Christian and that there's reason to believe that she's genuinely converted.

Also, we are assuming that she professes similar doctrinal convictions as the man that she is considering for marriage and vice versa. There should be a doctrinal compatibility between the man and the woman. It's not going to work for a man who believes in the sovereignty of God in salvation to get married to a rank Arminian wife, especially if she's not teachable on the matter. That's just not going to work because once you get past the romance and you get past those initial few months of marriage and everything's hunky-dory, you have to get down to say, "Okay, where are we going to go to church? What are we going to teach our children? How are we going to evangelize them? How are we going to talk to our children about God? Do we rush them into a sinner's prayer when they're three years old or do we wait and let the Spirit of God work in their hearts and biblical truth to shape them?" And what you believe about the sovereignty of God in salvation has a defining impact on what you do in the most fundamental matters that will affect your spiritual life for the rest of your earthly existence.

So you must consider doctrine when you're considering who it is that you're going to marry and no matter what your other emotional or relational attachments may be, if one person is correct about the sovereignty of God in salvation and another person is incorrect and wants to emphasize the will of man as being the decisive factor, you need to realize that that's not going to work. You need to be candid with each other and above all else, you need to be faithful to the Lord. You need to be faithful to your biblical convictions and what Scripture says. You must first of all be faithful to the Lord and faithful to Scripture before you decide anything about what's going to happen with your married life. God will not bless you if you sacrifice his truth at the altar of earthly passion. So we're assuming these things and, frankly, that's really where I should emphasize here in this message but having stated that, you at least know where I'm coming from and that's what we're going on.

So we assume a Christian, we assume compatible doctrinal convictions, and now we're going to move in and say, "Well, how can I know then if she's a marrying kind of woman?" Stated differently, you know, another way to approach this and get the same answer is, "How can we test that this woman actually believes what she says or that she truly is who she appears to be on the outside?" How do we know that we are not dealing

with a double faced woman? How do we know that we're not dealing with a self-deceived woman? What are some of the things that we can look at? And as a father of five daughters, this is an important question for me personally. So as parents, as single people, as a church body, the question we ask is: what should we look for, what should we seek to see if a woman is ready for marriage? And we're going to ask and answer five questions along the way, drawing principles from the book of Ruth.

Question 1 then as we're moving in and starting to take notes now. I've already taken all of my notes and so the notetaking responsibility is obviously just on you because all of my notes are right here and ready to go. Question 1: how does she deal with adversity? How does she deal with adversity? You want to know the answer to that question to see if there's any track record that would give you an indication. Ruth in the book that we've been studying for a few weeks now, Ruth, you will remember, was a widow before she came to the people of Israel. Look at Ruth 1:4-5 speaking of Elimelech's sons, "They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband." The bereft woman there was Naomi. The two children that she had lost were her sons. She had lost her husband and now was left with Ruth and Orpah, the point here being that before we ever get into the considerations with Boaz and what happens in chapters 2, 3 and 4, what we see when we see Ruth is she is a woman who had gone through the adversity of losing her husband. She had gone through the difficult transition from being married to now being a widow and being alone with Naomi, and she had gone through adversity. The hardship and sorrow for her must have been extreme, but here's what you want to see about this: Ruth did not quit living in response to that. She moved forward in life; she developed loyalty to Naomi; and she continued to move forward in life even though she had had this great tragedy that came into her life.

Now, most marriageable women are not going to be in their 20s and such, it's not going to be that they were tested by that kind of adversity, but what we're going to find when we examine anyone's life closely is that things go wrong in life, and what you want to know is what has gone wrong in this woman's life in the past and how has she responded to it. You know, has she been betrayed by friends? Has she had struggles financially or difficulties in family life? And you want to see, you want to know, how was it that she responded to that because it is inevitable in marriage that trials and difficulties will come, that's just the nature of life. There is no such thing as getting married and living happily ever after in the sense that there is never adversities or difficulties or trials that come. Ruth had developed her life after her husband passed away. She had moved on and manifested a level of character and maturity that showed that she was a worthy woman fit to be married.

Now, so, what do you ask yourself? What do you look for as you're asking this question how does she deal with it adversity? Well, you know, you want to look for things like this: does this woman live in past regret, bitterness, or sorrow? Or do you see manifested in her life a sense of understanding God's purposes in trials? Do you see a forgiving spirit in her if others have wronged her? Do you see her moving beyond sorrow and getting on

with life? Now, if a marriageable woman is, you know, if she's 20 years old, we understand that there's going to be a smaller sample to draw upon to evaluate that, but whatever the case may be, you want to ask, you want to get a sense is there anything here that tells me how this woman deals with adversity or not; is there something in her life experience that gives me a sense of what to expect. And we're making, I guess, I could just plainly state what I think is an obvious presupposition, we're assuming that we never know what's going to happen in the future but the best way that we can gauge what is likely to happen in the future from a human perspective is to look at the past of how someone has acted in the past and that becomes a prediction for how they are going to act in the future. You should never assume that somebody that does not handle adversity well in the past, that they are suddenly going to switch gears just because a ring is on their finger and suddenly they'll respond with maturity. Don't bring that kind of sorrow and hardship into your life if you can avoid it.

So you ask the question: how does she deal with adversity? And if she hasn't had much adversity, that's okay, that doesn't disqualify anyone from marriage, a lack of adversity, you just want to know if it's there how she responded to it. There are plenty of other questions that we have coming that will give you other points of reference to make a wise decision, and perhaps question 2 is one of the best: does she demonstrate loyalty? Does she demonstrate loyalty? And this is perhaps of everything that we could say after we calculate all of our presuppositions about doctrinal convictions and conversion and all of this, this may be perhaps the most important question that you could ask about a woman's character and look for to see in her life: does she demonstrate loyalty?

The book of Ruth is perhaps best known for Ruth's loyalty to Naomi. The most famous passage in the book is her words to Naomi in chapter 1, verse 16. Actually, I'll start in verse 15 just to set the context. You remember how Naomi bid those two daughters-in-law to return to Moab and find their husbands there. She says, "Let me go. You go back and take care of yourselves and I'm going to go on but I don't want you to come with me because it won't be good for you." Verse 15, Naomi said, "Behold," speaking to Ruth, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; you return after your sister-in-law." Naomi gives her a direct instruction saying, "You go back," and Ruth won't hear of it. Verse 16, she says, "Don't talk to me that way, Naomi. What do you think you're doing? Don't urge me to leave you." Look at verse 16, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." And as you move forward in the book of Ruth, we'll come back and expound on this in a moment, this made a statement to Boaz and to others in the community of Israel when the story became known. It developed a reputation for Ruth.

Look at Ruth 2:11. When Boaz first meets Ruth, he said to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me." So somebody told Boaz about Ruth and they told him the story and the details. "And how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know." So Boaz before he ever began to consider Ruth as a wife, knew something about her background; knew how she had shown loyalty to Naomi, and

he calculated it in and saw that here was a woman of excellence as shown by the way that she stayed loyal to a woman when it did not appear to be in her interest to do so. It was not obviously in Ruth's self-interest to follow a widowed mother-in-law to a foreign land that she had never lived in before. How can that possibly turn out well for her? Well, Ruth's character is seen and measured by the fact that she did not calculate her self-interest and rather made her decisions based on her loyalty to the one person closest to her in her life. So Boaz noticed that loyalty and it no doubt influenced his interest in her going forward.

Now, how can we draw that into the 21st century and make some application? I've got a couple of things to say about that. You'd want to know this, you would want to know this: does this woman in front of you, does this woman under consideration, speaking as if to a man, speaking to you young unmarried ladies in terms in kind of examining yourself in light of these principles, what should you be asking yourself? Take a look at your life and ask yourself this: do you show continuity and faithfulness to your family, friends and church? Is there a pattern of consistency and loyalty in existing relationships that mark this woman's life or not? If there is and you end up being married to this woman, you can have a reasonable degree of confidence that that pattern of loyalty in her character is going to transfer over into the marriage relationship. The past is an indication of the future. By contrast, if this is a woman who burns bridges, has a lot of broken relationships in her past but says, "Oh babe, I'm with you, though," well, you need to slow down and think pretty seriously about what you're doing there because her past indicates that loyalty is not one of the traits in her life.

Here's another question for you to ask, this one, and I'm not going to qualify everything that I say here with a bunch of nuance and qualifying with exceptions because then we would be here all night and you'd end up missing the whole point of the basic premises that are involved here. If I were a young man getting married, I would want to know and pay close attention to how this woman speaks about her father. How does she speak? How does she speak about the central man in her life up until that point? Does she speak in loving terms about him? Does she speak in loyalty about him? Or does she desecrate him? Does she discount him? Does she marginalize him? Is she critical of him? I realize there are a lot of bad dads and a lot of absent dads in the world today but you want to ask yourself, if a woman comes from any kind of a stable family, you want to pay attention to how she talks about her dad because that's an indication of the kind of wife she will become. There's just no denying that. As I've spoken on the family over the past several weeks, I've spoken a little bit more of personal things than I normally do but just using my own wife as an illustration, when we were dating, one of the things that stood out to me was the way that she honored her father and everything that she said about him, and her love and respect for her father, for his role in ministry, was evident. And I thought, "Okay, that will probably transfer over to me one day, and if it did that would really be good because it would really be good to have a loyal wife."

Well, if a woman is not like that, don't assume, don't say, "Well, I'm sure it will just work out and she'll end up being faithful to me." You see, that's what I'm trying to protect you from, is that kind of foolish presumption on a situation without dealing seriously with an

issue that's in front of you; a known issue should not be discounted when you're talking about a permanent covenant obligation in marriage. You're on the front end of the decision, you have an opportunity to protect yourself. Be smart, be objective about it and don't simply give into the desire, "You know, I want to get married as quickly as possible. This woman is available and willing so we'll go for it and I don't want to hear anything else." I can't tell you how discouraging it can be in ministry to find a couple that just will not receive counsel or constructive input on their relationship because they've already determined what they want to have happen. That's not a good situation. That's not healthy at all. There should be a willingness to receive instruction from those who love you and have some measure of authority in your life.

So as you're asking this question, does she manifest loyalty or does she bounce around and leave broken relationships behind, you want to know the answer to that question so that you can at least make an informed decision about it, and if there's a bad history there, then we can say, "Okay, well, what can we do to improve this and is she receptive to instruction and discipleship on that?" Then, you know, a bad past isn't a permanent bar to anything but you want to be able to identify and see how we respond to instruction going forward. That's the point. We're not trying to make final decisions for anyone with these things, we just want to honor a principle. And here's the thing, beloved, you can tell I've got five daughters so I think about these things and it matters to me a lot and I just keep kind of going and going and going on it. You know, you just can't approach marriage in a sense that, "I just want to get married as quickly as possible and don't bother me with the details." That's how people set themselves up for a miserable life. Better to wait an extra year or two in the timing of the Lord for a right person to come than to deliberately close your eyes and close your ears to things that would warn you before you get into a bad situation. You see, and the fact that we are able to talk about this with no context of a present relationship here lets you see that I'm not trying to ruin anybody's life or interfere with anybody's relationships here, we're just dealing with principles here, principles that would help you make a wise and good decision and would secure as much as possible from a human perspective, your well-being in marriage going forward. That's what we care about. That's why we're having this discussion.

Now, many people, many commentators have drawn attention to the fact that there are parallels to the book of Ruth and her character found in Proverbs 31. As we deal with the question, does she manifest loyalty, look over at Proverbs 31 for a cross-reference here. Proverbs 31:10-12, and you see that Scripture places a high value on an excellent wife. Elsewhere in Proverbs it says "a man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." We want that favor for all of you who desire marriage.

Verse 10, "An excellent wife, who can find?" There's not an oversupply of excellent women going around and so the writer of Proverbs here, chapter 31, goes on and explains and give some illustrations about what you look for in an excellent wife. He says, "her worth is far above jewels." Verse 11, "The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life." So there's this manifest loyalty in the woman that shows forth in the way that she treats her husband and what we're saying now is that if you're on the front end of marriage, you look for

indications that she's wired that way to begin with, and you make the assumption if you see it that, "Okay, that will continue over in marriage as well." We understand, we understand that sometimes things don't work out and we get surprises, but what we can do is we can avoid making foolish decisions that come from not being aware of what to look for, or foolish decisions that come from ignoring things that were evident from the start. I hope that's clear.

So, the question is: how does she handle adversity; does she show loyalty, are there traits of loyalty that you can identify in her character. You'd want to know that, and as I said, how does she speak about her father, how does she speak about her church elders, things like that. How does she speak about the men that have authority in her life because you, as her husband, would become the authority in her life, "Women, submit to your husbands as unto the Lord." You want to know. You want to get a pattern of how she responds to authority and respond to that.

Now, thirdly, we ask this question: does she demonstrate industry? Does she demonstrate industry, industry being a fancy word for saying is she a hard worker. Ruth, in this regard, was exemplary. Go back to Ruth chapter 2 with me now, Ruth 2, beginning in verse 7. We'll just kind of rehearse the work that Ruth did in the field to see what she manifested. Understand that as we look at Ruth 2 and at Ruth 3, that all of these things were manifesting themselves before Boaz agreed to pursue marriage with her, and so Boaz had seen her character being manifested in a way that made him receptive when marriage was brought into the discussion. What was it that Boaz saw? In one way we could say this: Boaz, we're looking at Ruth through Boaz's eyes to see what he saw and what attracted him to her.

In verse 7, ah, let's go to chapter 2, verse 5, he asked his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "'Whose young woman is this?' The servant in charge of the reapers replied, 'She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.'" So, as it were, Boaz's foreman is giving him a report. Verse 7, "she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while." Look at verse 17, you see Ruth, "she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley," working hard in the midst to provide for her and Naomi as we've seen in past exposition. Verse 23 of Ruth 2, "So Ruth stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law." So throughout chapter 2, you see Ruth as this hard-working woman and when it comes to running a household after marriage, you want someone who has a decent work ethic. A lazy woman will be the bane of your existence.

Look again at Proverbs 31 as it extols the virtues of an excellent wife and you see Proverbs emphasizing a good work ethic again. Verse 13 of Proverbs 31, "She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight. She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens." She's up early. She's caring for the people that

depend upon her. She's working hard. She's diligent in making use of her time. So, men, as if you're looking at a woman, you just want to take a look and say, "You know, what does she do with her time? Is she lazy? Does she lounge around? Does she sleep 12 hours a day? Or is there a demonstrable pattern of diligence in her life that I could expect to carry over into married life as we go about our lives?" Will this woman carry her share of the load or will you end up carrying her along the way? You want to know the answer to that question, men, and if you say, "I don't care if she's lazy," well, at least you've made an informed decision and you can bear the consequence of that going forward.

But you want to ask a question like that: what kind of worker is she? What kind of loyalty does she manifest? How does she handle adversity? We come to a fourth question: does she demonstrate modesty? Does she demonstrate modesty? How does this woman carry herself? Is she brash and loud and boastful? Or is she soft spoken and godly in her speech? Look at Ruth 2:10, look at the way that she spoke to Boaz. It's a different culture back then. Women don't bow to the ground when men walk by. Just notice the self-effacing way in which Ruth spoke of herself, Ruth 2:10, "she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to Boaz, 'Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?'" There is a humility, there is a modesty in her character that influences the way that she speaks to Boaz. She says, "You're being so kind to me. Why? Do you realize who I am? I'm just a foreigner. I'm a Moabite woman. What is there about me that you would show kindness to me?" So you want to ask, you know, you want to pay attention to the way that she carries herself. Now, we're not talking about whether a woman is quiet as a mouse or whether she talks a lot, that's not the point. You know, there's going to be a wide variety of personality types: some are quiet, some speak a lot, and every aspect of the spectrum is represented right here in this room and that's great. We don't have to be alike, but what you want to look for is is there an evident pride or a humility that marks this woman in the way that she carries herself?

Young men, speaking to those of you in the room, those who may hear this in future media in different ways, what you need to do is guard your heart. You need to be careful about what you let attract you. This is what we're talking about here, guarding your heart. A carnal woman, a boastful, loud, borderline profane woman may have fleshly appeal at the beginning and entertain you and regale you with laughter in the early part of the relationship; a loud woman may make for a night full of laughs but as a pattern of marriage, think twice. Be careful. Guard your heart. Think into the future about what you're doing and what you are expecting. Think twice because an indiscreet woman in marriage is someone who is likely to embarrass you and bring you a lot of heartache and you want to be mindful of that. And of course, as we've talked about modesty, we've talked about it here from kind of a character perspective but, men, we might as well just go right to the point and remember and call out the fact that the Bible makes modest dress an important standard for a godly woman.

Look at 1 Timothy 2. And here, men, we're talking about the things that would help you guard your heart, especially for a young man dealing with the normal desires of youth. You want to be careful here, particularly careful here and let Scripture inform and strengthen your heart. Let Scripture give strength where perhaps your physical desires

lead you into weakness. 1 Timothy 2:9, and ladies, you all need to hear this to one degree or another, either to affirm your approach to life or to perhaps have you reconsider what you're doing. 1 Timothy 2:9, the Apostle Paul speaking as an ordained appointed representative of the Lord Jesus Christ who is giving command for the church and how women should be who claim the name of Christ. There is no option here. This is not optional. 1 Timothy 2:9, Paul says, "I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works." Do you see how the industry comes up again? "But rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness." And you see his further indications, his further reinforcement of other things that we've said here this evening, verse 11, "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness."

So Paul says, "A woman who claims to be a Christian must be one who dresses with modesty and discretion." And as a young man, you just need to be mindful that while red and yellow might catch a fellow, you need to be mindful and ask yourself, "Why is she dressing that way if she is making claims to godliness?" If she is indiscreet and immodest and she is showing more than she should be showing, don't make that as an invitation to marriage to you, make it a warning sign that says, "Well, I'd better be careful here because this is a manifestation of someone who is not in conformity with biblical principles." So you have to watch yourselves and realize that your physical desires may lead you in a way that is not wise and proper in the long term. So, when we see Ruth and we see the modest way that she laid at Boaz's feet and the modest way that she carried herself and character, we see that Ruth was a forerunner of New Testament standards, wasn't she? She gives us an indication. She was an initial light that set an example that was confirmed in later revelation in Proverbs 31 and 1 Timothy 2. So does she manifest modesty is a question that you want to ask yourself.

Now, fifthly. We've said how does she deal with adversity; does she demonstrate loyalty; does she demonstrate industry; does she demonstrate modesty. Fifthly you want to ask this question: does she respect you? Does she respect you? Ruth addressed Boaz with honor and humility. Go back to Ruth 2, kind of overlapping points here. Ruth 2 as I make my way in my own Bible back to that portion of Scripture. Ruth 2, there is another verse that I don't think I read earlier, didn't intend to anyway, verse 13. Look at the way that she addresses Boaz. "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants." She's speaking with that humility and yet she's addressing him with a mature respect, with an esteem. "You know, I recognize that you have treated me well. Thank you. I appreciate it. I don't deserve that but I recognize it and I'm grateful for the way that you have dealt with me, Boaz."

Well, men, a marrying kind of woman should have esteem for you. She should respect you. She should have regard for you in one manner or another that should be evident to you, and that respect is intrinsic to marriage. We saw this past Sunday, 48 hours ago, give or take, where Paul said at the end of Ephesians 5, he said, "Let the wife see to it that she respect her husband." So, men, if a woman starts to develop a pattern of belittling you or

mocking you, step back and say, "Wait a minute, if this is the way that she treats me before we're married and yet she expresses interest, what is she going to do after she has the catch? What is she going to do when there is not the motivation to try to make this relationship work out and she already has me, what's going to happen then?" Take the way that she treats you now for good or for ill prior to marriage, multiply it by 10 or 20 or 30 and you'll get a picture of what your future marriage is like. If she shows regard for you and honors you and respects your opinion and affirms you, you can expect that to carry over into marriage. Conversely, if she's not like that before marriage, don't expect the ring to change anything. Her character is not going to change simply because you appear before a pastor in front of witnesses and say, "I do." It's going to be the same character before or after and so you want to ask that question and be aware of it.

The Apostle Peter spoke to this also, 1 Peter 3. Look at 1 Peter 3 with me. 1 Peter 3, we'll take a breath after we read this passage and just step back and remind everyone what we're doing here. 1 Peter 3. Now, one thing that I want to say before I read this is to re-emphasize something. There is just a lot of balance that we need as we consider these things. We've said beforehand that a girlfriend does not give the same kind of submission to her boyfriend that a wife does to her husband. The ring makes all the difference, and so a woman should not be giving over to a man that she's not married to the kind of unconditional submission that Scripture calls for. You reserve that. You protect your heart. You guard the relationship and do not bring the cake out of the oven before its time, so to speak. You don't rush love and engage things that are reserved for marriage before you're actually married. So we're talking about traits and character trajectories here when we talk about what it means to be a marrying kind of woman.

1 Peter 3:1-4, understanding that he's talking about husbands and wives and what we're saying here is we want to see are there indications in this woman's character that she will become this kind of wife. That's what you want to see. Chapter 3, verse 1, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." Do you just see how Scripture just emphasizes the same things over and over again when it talks about the character of a woman? It gives a consistent picture of what it should be like: chaste, respectful, submissive, modesty, all of those terms wrapped together to present a kind of woman who is fit for Christian marriage, and we disregard it at our peril.

Verse 3, "Your adornment must not be merely external - braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." A modest woman marked by a gentle quiet spirit, not contentious, trustworthy; a woman who can be believed when she says what she says; no distinction between the way that she is with one group of friends versus another. You should be seeing a consistency for a woman that is ready to be married. You should see a manifest consistency in the way that she lives her life.

Now, we've answered five questions, I've got one more issue that I want to get to but let me just come back to what I said last week about men and the five questions we asked about men. What we said about men we say also here: these are guiding principles. We're not making final determinations here. We're talking about questions that would help you ascertain and assess the direction of a woman's life. Or if you're a single woman, for you to evaluate and say, "Is my life, is my character going in the right direction or not?" Take a look in the mirror, "How do I dress? How do I speak to people? Can I be believed when I say what I say?" And if you are honest and you start to say, "Uh, no. That doesn't mark me at all," well, then you need to stop, forget about marriage and start to concentrate on 1, whether you're a Christian or not, and then secondly, if you are and you do belong to Christ, you realize, "You know, before I even think about marriage, I need to grow in my sanctification before the Lord." And ladies, don't be afraid of that question because if you're growing in sanctification before the Lord, it will alter what you want in a man. Your own sanctification will change your own desires about the kind of man that you want to marry. A carnal woman will be looking for a carnal man whether she realizes it or not, and she won't be looking for a man of strong doctrinal convictions who is prepared to lead her spiritually because she's not even aware that that's an important issue.

So, ladies, if you see that you're falling short here, say, "Do you know what? Marriage can wait. Let me spend some time alone with the Lord over a period of time and have him shape me so that I start to see in my own life these principles of which Scripture speaks so often." At the same time, men, you realize you're not going to find a perfect woman. As we said last time, this woman is going to have blemishes in her life just like you have blemishes in yours. So we don't hold them up to an unattainable standard. That's not the point. We are asking about direction. We're asking about heart affection. Does a woman even want to be like that? Those are the kinds of things that you want to know and ask.

Now, last week and up until now this week, we have not said anything at all about the matter of physical attraction, have we? And I can tell by your shocked faces, "I can't believe he's going there." Well, of course I'm going to go there. This is a pastoral necessity. Let's ask this question: should Christians include physical attraction in their consideration of a potential mate? Are you physically attracted to them or not? Is that unspiritual? I've heard many people over the years, some teachers, some just in ordinary conversations, "Well, if they are two Christians, that's enough and they can sort everything else out on their own." Is that a wise way to approach marriage? And let me just say this: in some cultures marriage is arranged by parents or other leaders and you don't even get a choice in the matter and in that situation, you're not going to have much say in the matter. In our culture here in the United States, in the West, you have some say in who you marry and so the question is: should I be physically attracted to this man, should I be physically attracted to this woman before I move forward in marriage or is it enough even if that's not there, would that be okay? So the question: should Christians include physical attraction in their consideration of a potential mate?

Now, let me give you an important Greek word that will give you all the perspective that you need to think through that properly. Here's an important Greek word for you. I don't often pull out the Greek in my messages but this one just really helps. Are you ready? Should Christians include physical attraction in their consideration of a potential mate? Here's the word that you want to know: duh. Duh. Are you kidding me? Do we even need to ask that question? Well, based on my experience, yeah, we actually do. Of course physical attraction is part of the consideration in a culture like ours that does not arrange marriage for the couple. And let's just be discreet and yet blunt in what we're about to say. Let's start with Scripture here: God requires, commands, leaves no option for spouses to give themselves to each other in physical intimacy after they are married. It is not optional, it is required. It is commanded.

Look at 1 Corinthians 7:3-4. I have an illustration from my days in California that I want to give to you. If I seem to forget it, raise your hand and remind me because it's important but, first of all, Scripture. 1 Corinthians 7:3-4. Paul speaking about intimacy in marriage says in verse 3, chapter 7, verse 3, "The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." Stop depriving one another, speaking about sexual intimacy in marriage. Now, God commands this. God created sex to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage and he commands it as that which is a right and proper activity, for lack of a better word, in marriage and that it is wrong and it is sinful for a spouse to withhold intimacy from her husband or the man from his wife. That's very, very wrong and very, very sinful.

So as you're thinking about marriage, I'm bringing it back to a marrying kind of woman, women should ask this about a potential man and vice versa. You should ask yourself, you should first of all, it should be clear in your mind what the biblical responsibilities in marriage are, "Wives, submit to your husbands. Husbands, love your wives. Husbands, don't deprive your wife. Wife, don't deprive your husband." Have that clear in your mind and then bring the greater general principles to bear as you think through the relationship that is in front of you, and when it comes to the matter of intimacy, you should ask yourself this question: do you want that level of unfiltered intimacy with this person that you're considering or not? Do you want that person to have you in that way? Because once you're married, that is their entitlement and it is your scriptural duty and you don't have an option after the ceremony to say, "Do you know what? I don't want that." That's sinful. It's wrong. It's sin against God to live that way in marriage. And so you see the point here that before you're married, then you ask yourself the hard question: do I want that with this person or not? A failure to do that can only lead to disaster. Marriage, beloved, marriage is a comprehensive statement, physically, spiritually, mentally; it is a comprehensive statement that says, "I want to give myself completely to you and I want you completely to myself."

Now, here's the point: if you consciously withdraw from the thought of physical participation with that person, you're not being realistic. You should not get married when the thought of that is, "I don't want that." And no matter how far along in the

relationship you are and however long you've been together in your relationship, if you're not willing to cross that barrier, if that's not attractive and enticing to you, you should call the whole thing off because your lack of sincerity and your lack of enthusiasm will cause great harm, shame, and hurt if you proceed with the marriage. No, especially if you know you feel that way in advance. It would be deceptive for you to know that this, and I'm just, it goes both ways but I just speak one direction, it would be wrong for a woman feelings that way saying, "I really don't want that man. Oh, the thought of that is awful. You know, I don't know why he wears his hair that way but it just turns me off. I don't want him to touch me." It would be so wrong and deceptive for you to proceed with marriage and to justify, "Well, you know, we're both Christians and so it's okay." It's not okay for you to present yourself as though, "I am gladly, freely giving myself to you," when inside you're saying, "That's the last thing on earth I want." You can't spiritualize that away and make that right by saying, "Well, we're both Christians," if you know in advance in your heart, "That's not what I want."

So, of course, physical attraction is part of the equation. Don't marry someone if the thought of physical touch and intimacy repels you. That would just be misleading. And I'll never forget back at the other place we lived in California for a number of years, I'll never forget there was a girl that I knew. Nancy and I had already been married for many, many years and sometimes you just observe people and things just kind of stand out to you. There was a young woman that I knew from my multitude of circles of relationships out there, and she had been dating this particular guy. I can't remember if they were engaged or not, but just follow the illustration here because you'll see a little window that will help you test things for your own good going forward if you're not married yet. And I'm going to call this woman Sarah, and I'm just trusting the Lord that her correct name, her actual name won't accidentally slip out of my mouth because I don't want that to happen. I wouldn't want to embarrass her, not that any of you would know her.

But Sarah had this boyfriend and they were pretty far down the road toward marriage. And we were sitting a couple of rows behind them one Sunday morning and I noticed something really weird. Here they are, they're in this relationship and they're sitting together and, you know, Sarah has made known, "We're moving toward marriage." But I noticed that they were sitting like, you know, a couple of feet apart or a foot, a foot and a half apart. They weren't sitting shoulder to shoulder. And I'll never forget this, she wanted to ask him a question about something. There had been an announcement that this event was coming up, and she asked him, "Are you going to go?" I kind of read lips, you know, if you're close up. But the thing that stood out to me, with this man that she was about to get married too, here's how she asked him, "Are you going to go?" That's not normal? If you're about to get married, if you're romantically involved with someone, you're leaning over. You're saying, "Are we going to go?" And you take advantage of the pretext to get a little bit of physical closeness together. When you consciously avoid that in a way that is just culturally abnormal and you're stiff and, "Are you going to go?" I knew right then that something was seriously wrong in the relationship. That's not how people who love each other and are attracted to each other act.

You know, I never said anything to her but three, four months later, they broke up and went their own different directions and now she's, I think, happily married to someone else. But, you see, if you find yourself artificially withdrawing, holding back, you don't even want to be close, oh, that's a warning sign. Don't deceive the person that you're in the relationship with and pretend that you have an interest that you don't. Don't do that to them. Don't do it to yourself. That's not right. That's deceptive. There should be some manner of physical attraction.

Now, in a Christian relationship, you have shared convictions, a shared commitment to Christ, you're mutually available, you're mutually interested, physical desire is going to flow naturally out of that in any kind of normal relationship. At the same time as we're saying these things and now I want to be a little bit humorous, I guess, at the same time, you need to be realistic. Maybe this marrying kind of woman is not one with movie star good looks. Well, be realistic. Do you know what? You're not in the movies either. Do you know what? No one's lining up asking for your photo so that they can put it on product placement. So, you know, you just need to look in the mirror and be honest with yourself, "Okay, I'm not a five-star catch myself," and not dismiss an otherwise perfectly marriageable woman just because she doesn't conform to cultural standards of sexuality. You need to be a mature enough Christian to look beyond that. But at the same time, you need to be mindful that once you're into the marriage, that spouse is going to want you to want them and don't get married if you just say, "That's just not me. I just don't want that." Be honest enough. It's better to hurt them now and say no and end the relationship before you get married than to inflict upon them 40 years of refusal and indifference and coldness. Better to hurt them now than to ruin their life with a lack of desire that you knew in advance.

So, alright, well, that's a lot of stuff. But just to wrap this up: in most cases, a Christian marrying kind of man and a Christian marrying kind of woman will find that physical attraction will flow from shared spiritual values so don't overthink it. You know, and for all of the things that we've said, don't overthink these things. Don't subject it to days and days of rigorous analysis, but at the same time, don't be careless. We want what's best for you. We want what's best for your future spouse. And so where can we leave all of this, marrying kind of man, marrying kind woman? Focus on becoming a marrying kind of woman and trust the Lord to bring the marrying kind of man to you in his time. God bless you.

Let's pray together.

Father, we've talked about such personal things here this evening. We trust that you'll take these things and apply them to our hearts. Give wisdom to parents as they help their sons and daughters think through these things. Give wisdom to young people who are in that marriageable age and who desire what you have established for companionship. Give them wisdom, Father. Bring them that which would fulfill their heart desires. And yet, Father, do it in a way that would honor these principles that we've seen from your word. Father, thank you for those of us that have good marriages. We thank you that you brought the right spouse to us at just the right time. Father, for those that are lonely

perhaps in widowhood or perhaps in a marriage that hasn't been at all what anyone thought it would be at the time, Father, would you manifest your grace to bring comfort and encouragement and that the love of Christ would be that which would sustain a heart which finds a lack of love here in earthly terms. Father, may we find our sufficiency, our satisfaction in Christ alone and from overflowing hearts give ourselves to these kinds of things that would bring blessing to others. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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