

**Scripture Reading: Psalm 1**

**“Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.”**

**Proverbs 30:18 “There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Yes, four which I do not understand: 19 The way of an eagle in the air, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the midst of the sea, & the way of a man with a virgin.”**

## **"Who Can Find A Virtuous Wife?"**

**Last week I spent time reminding us about the importance of marriage, seeing it as a creational ordinance of one man and one women which shows the world the Triune Nature of God and the great love of Jesus for His Bride the Church which Michael will expand on next week.**

**This morning we will turn to our children and young people to share some wisdom and instruction on the question of courtship and engagement. Now you will find neither of those words in the Bible so perhaps I am on pretty dangerous ground here! Actually I am not because we find many general principles in the Scriptures that can be applied in areas of our lives just as we do for example in the financial area of our lives: You will not find the words budget or investment in the Bible...**

- **But the Word of God certainly has much to say about our financial affairs, and those who ignore them do so at their own peril.**

**When dealing with such principles, we must remember that we can often have a shared goal but different details in the journey toward that goal. This is where the old legalism can come in and it is a problem we will find in many books, and I guess even sermons, on the subject of courtship & engagements.**

- **Because certain details worked well in one situation, it does not mean this is the way it must always be done in ALL situations.**

**And conversely, just because something failed in one case, does not mean it is never a wise thing to do.**

- **Of course the most important point is to have the right goal!**

**If there is a shared goal, it should open up good communications with the proper give and take on details as you move toward that goal. IF we don't share the same goal, if we are NOT going to the same place, then often people will be talking past each other or ignoring one another.**

**If you are a dedicated vegetarian and I am presenting the best way to cook a tasty roast, you will not care about what I am saying will you?**

- **So most of what I will share today assumes we have seriously considered what I taught last week regarding marriage!**

**If your desire is to have something other than a strong Biblical marriage or even if you don't much care about marriage, then what I share today will make little sense and you will likely ignore or criticize what I teach. And of course here is where those of us who are parents and those who join with those parents in our covenant community have the responsibility:**

- **Both our teaching and our example should instill in our young people a love for marriage!**

And even if we are moving toward the same goal, we must also understand the sense in which I share these principles. I made the important point last week that marriage vows were NOT to be seen as chains or shackles to keep people tied up in a miserable relationship. They are intended to lay a strong foundation for a healthy relationship! And Lord willing, what I share today will also be considered in that same light...

- My goal is NOT to provide a long list of dos and don'ts but rather to lay out important principles that will help our young people to be excited about marriage and to properly prepare for a strong loving and life-long marriage. *[mention that the little ones are going to have questions!]*

Let me begin with a fundamental error that we see far too often today in our age of sexual promiscuity and attacks on marriage, which is why I added the short text from Proverbs that I read: We rightly want our children and young people to avoid sexual sins... While this is important, the danger is if we only speak about what is WRONG with sex then in the end they are unprepared for the joy of sex in marriage which should be a glorious and critical part of any marriage!

We cannot expect our little ones to spend their lives ONLY hearing about what is wrong with their sexual feelings & suddenly think they are prepared when they are thrust into a marriage, hoping for the best!

Rather, we should help them to understand why King Agur included the physical part of a marriage as one of the four wonders he listed: I think we all get excited about the flight of an eagle, the slithering of a snake and of course ships and sailing make for great movies & discussions! BUT when it comes to thinking about the way of a man with his maid, well that is not discussed in polite company!

Yet the Bible wants our young people to understand that it is quite natural for people to be attracted to the opposite sex and while it should not be allowed to lead them into sin, they must not be afraid of what is a natural part of their maturity. It is one of the great adventures of life and they should look forward to their participation, just as they would flying a plane or sailing the high seas!

- They should look forward to and prepare for a strong and healthy physical relationship with their future wife or husband.

So we must teach them to avoid sexual sins while at the same time not discouraging a healthy respect and even excitement with regard to what happens in the marriage bed! It is similar in so many areas of our lives:

- God loves to bless His people with material blessings, but the love of money is condemned.
- God made food very tasty, but condemns gluttony.

And this is also very true with our physical relationships: What we call having sex today and the polite KJV calls knowing her.

- The marriage bed is celebrated in the Scriptures which is something we must not forget!

With all the sexual sins around us in the 21st Century, we can be ashamed or uncomfortable with an honest reading the Song of Solomon?

- But, our married members should read and study the Song of Solomon to enrich their love!

Our young people should read and study the Song of Solomon to understand and to be excited about what God has in store for them!

However the same Bible also condemns sexual sins with very harsh penalties!

- As we learned last week, this is because of the importance of marriage!

Thus the study of Proverbs is also very important, so young men choose Lady Wisdom over the harlot and our young ladies become the women of Proverbs 31 rather than the contentious wife!"

So as we work through some principals I would like to share, keep in mind a very important passage that came up a few weeks ago in our daily readings:

- Proverbs 25:28 “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls.”

In other words, IF you have no control over your passions you will be like an ancient city with no walls to protect them from enemy attacks.

- With walls, the life of the city can be healthy and prosperous because it is safe.
- Again as with those marriage vows, the walls of a city are not there to trap or enslave the inhabitants, but rather they are there to keep them safe!
- Controlling your passions keeps you safe!

That is our heart-felt desire for all of our children and young people here at Church of the King today. So let me walk through these principals understanding that each individual and family may follow them in their own way...

- But the goal is to work toward healthy and strong marriages!

Understanding of course that we know in our fallen world there can be uncomfortable delays and perhaps for some even the gift of singleness.

- And yes, that gift is real, but it is a gift from God’s Spirit!

So young people if you are attracted to the opposite sex, then you do not have the gift and God’s plan for you is to one day be married! So this is our first foundational principle:

- Desiring to be married is a GOOD thing!
- We should be at peace, that God knows who the right person is, but at the same time we are to act on that desire... *[example of worry not & working!]*

So as we encourage young people to marry, we have those old ditches to avoid or a pendulum that can swing too far one way or the other... We could go the route of arranged marriages and simply leave the young people out of the equation!

- I don’t think I have to spend a great deal of time convincing us that this is not the Biblical pattern nor a healthy way of doing things!

However, our modern world has gone off the other side of the road, leaving everything up to the young people and even encouraging them to ignore Godly advice, going so far as to live together BEFORE marriage to make sure they are making the right choice:

- I mean who would want to buy a car without a test drive?

This is where we have to spend more time because it is what you young people are being tempted with in the world they live in today.

- So the second great principal is that both parents and children should be involved in these decisions along with other wise people in their family or church.

Yes, they can be wrong in our fallen world...

- But if you are going against what your parents and other wise people in your life are saying, it is far more likely that it is you who is the one actually in the wrong!

This brings us to an important non-negotiable that must be added to what we learned about marriage last week: Not only must marriage be only between one man and one woman and be permanent...

- Christian children must marry within the faith!

Because marrying a non-Christian is NOT an option, this is one area where the rules should be strong, just like those marriage vows that protect the marriage. It is no accident that the first seven chapters of Proverbs speak to men so often about the dangers in this area: Concluding at the end of chapter seven with these sobering words: Proverbs 7:24 “Now therefore, listen to me, my children; Pay attention to the words of my mouth: 25 Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths; 26 For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men. 27 Her house is the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death.”

And that sober truth is underlined at the end of chapter nine: where we are told that her guests are in the depths of hell”

- Of course our prayer is that our young people will turn to Lady Wisdom whose offer of life we speak of so often, as we will again in a moment at this Table!

While we see this fundamental principle of marrying in the faith in many other places in the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus, it is the Apostle Paul who summarizes it in his second letter to the Saints at Corinth where he simply says: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” [II Corinthians 6:14]. So IF you have the proper goal of wanting a strong Biblical marriage and you understand that your husband or wife must also be a Christian...

- Then you will see the remainder of what I will be sharing as good counsel and a wise path for that journey.

Also, if this is where your priorities lie, then you will be able to read or listen to the MANY resources available in this area & be better able to pick & choose what is appropriate for your situation! I was also reminded by Pastor Doug Wilson this week about something I should share with the parents at this point:

- Our job is not primarily to get our children to conform to the standards, but rather to nurture and train them to have a love of the standards!

Now of course the “dos & don’ts” or rules for courtship & engagement are quite numerous with a new book or seminar showing up almost every week! As I said, we must decide as families and as individuals which of them are appropriate for our situation. A principle that I would ask you to keep in the background of all this is the importance of protecting hearts!

- So just what do I mean by that?

I mean simply that as young people take whatever actions they deem proper in the pursuit of a Godly spouse, that they keep in mind the spiritual, emotional and yes physical well-being of the opposite sex. Hollywood wants us to see young, and often very young “love” as something that is cute and normal. Young people speak about “going with someone” and ‘being in a relationship’ or as it was back in my day going steady. The BIG problem here is that they often lead to the physical sins that are forbidden, but even if they don’t you can still have a trail of broken hearts left behind when things don’t work out.

This is why your elders here at Church of the King believe that young people should avoid the casual dating scene, & that there should be a proper time of courtship before an engagement...

- AND that wherever possible the parents and especially the father of the young woman should be involved.

None of us are born with the name of our future husband or wife discreetly tattooed somewhere on our body or in our mind. So in our fallen world there will be times that we think we have met the right person and come to find out that we were wrong.

I have often counseled young men that they can avoid the devastation of rejection by first approaching a father and letting him make the initial inquiries.

If the relationship moves forward into what we would consider a courtship, it should be just that:

**A time, and preferably a relatively private time, where the two get to know each other and determine if it is God's will that they be in a life-long committed relationship. Once that is determined and the young man has asked for the daughter's hand and they are engaged it should be very public event on the same level of seriousness as a marriage.**

- **The purpose of engagement is not to see if things work out but to move toward the marriage!**

**At the same time courtship should be the time where our young people can find out about another person AND the opportunity to end it if they are not the one, with a minimum of emotional damage and no public embarrassment.**

- **Toward this end I would argue that physical contact should be kept to a minimum until there is an engagement.**

**Again we cannot be legalistic here and must realize that different people express things in different ways:**

- **Some are very sober or reserved and others are huggers!**

**Now hear me carefully when it comes to those physical contacts:**

**First we do have some pretty strong warnings in the Bible, like those early chapters of Proverbs or the Apostle Paul's admonition to not light the fires of passion outside of the marriage bed.**

**And this brings us back where we started with making sure our young people do have a proper understanding and anticipation of the joys of that bed!**

**The purpose of courtship and engagement is not to take test drives in the physical realm nor to try and steal a bit of your future joy...**

**You are striving to find the wife or husband that you are going to have all of that joy and fulfilment with in the state of holy matrimony!**

**And there are also two other things to seriously consider when it comes to physical contact outside of marriage:**

**One of the qualifications of a church leader is to be beyond reproach and that is a principle that applies to all of us! It is not a question of trust but of propriety: *[Give ex of counseling or lunches]***

**The second thing to consider if we have a proper view of the marriage bed and are looking forward to all that will be discovered and enjoyed with our life-long partner...**

- **Is to ask just what parts of it would you like to share with others?**

**Why is it that what we would find disgusting with a married person is just cute or fleeting or normal in young people? *[give examples]***

**I should also say just a word about the rampant use of pornography today:**

**It could take an entire sermon all on its own, but let me at least appeal to those tempted or involved with such things to consider the impact that it has NOT just on you but your spouse as well:**

- **It is a VERY selfish act that robs BOTH of you in the marriage bed! Sex before marriage or outside the marriage bed, whether real or imagined defiles the marriage bed!**

**I will leave you with this bottom-line thought: I have often seen, and the world is full of, sad examples of couples who have red hot passion in the beginning of a relationship that turns very ugly as the two realize they have no real foundation for a life-long relationship.**

- **Their foundation, no matter how glorious it seemed at the time is that of sand!**
- **This is why our divorce rate is so obscene today.**

**On the other hand, I cannot think of a single example of a couple who has laid the proper foundation for a life-long relationship, that has not been able to figure out how all the physical stuff works once they are married! And because they are striving to love and serve the other person as they should, it not only comes quite naturally, but grows and matures throughout all the time they have together!**

- **Their foundation was stone & their house stands in good times and bad!**

**If that is your desire, then what I have shared will be seen as helpful wisdom.**

**It will open up many good discussions and allow you to determine how all of the details should be worked out in your particular life.**

**If that is not your goal, then you probably see what I have shared as pretty useless at best or me as a legalistic kill-joy at worst.**

**I chose Psalm 1 as my text and we will sing it in a moment, because it really does come down to choosing one of two paths:**

- **The ways of the Lord or the ways of the world and I hope and pray that all of our young people choose wisely.**

**None of us will walk in even the right path perfectly which is why knowing the forgiveness that we have in Jesus is so important, but all of us can know the blessings that God offers to those who are on the right path:**

**Psalm 1 “Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.”**

**Communion Meditation: Proverbs 9**

**Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars;  
2 She has slaughtered her meat, She has mixed her wine,  
She has also furnished her table. 3 She has sent out her maidens,  
She cries out from the highest places of the city, 4 “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!”  
As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, 5 “Come, eat of my bread  
And drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding.**