

A Marrying Kind of Woman

Marriage and Courtship

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Well, today we finish a series on marriage and courtship that I've done as kind of an interlude between the book of Philippians and the series that I'm going to start next week going through the 10 Commandments which I've been working on and promising for a very long time. Today is the final message in our series on marriage and courtship and I'm delighted that you are here for it. We're teaching not only for the sake of married couples presently but also those that aspire after marriage and trying to help and encourage them. As a body, we are looking to develop a biblical sense of what the approach to marriage should look like. You know, if you think about it as a jumbo airliner coming in for a landing, what should that approach look like, what should the instruments be reading, how do we come in for a smooth landing so that we achieve what God would have us to do, and that young people entering into marriage could be confident of the blessing of God on what lies ahead? And even if you're not interested in marriage, these things are important for you because they're really dealing with Christian character overall, and it's important for us to have a general sense of mind and a general sense of unity about how we want to counsel and encourage young people as we have interactions with them on a private basis.

Last week, and we're looking at the book of Ruth, if you want to find Ruth in your Bible. It's the eighth book of the Bible in your English Bible just after the book of Judges. And last week as we looked at the book of Ruth, we considered the man Boaz and we made application from his life and example about men and what a marrying kind of man looks like. I'm sure there are copies of that message available out in the foyer as well as being available online, and we saw what a marrying kind of man looks like. Well, it obviously begs the question what is the marrying kind of woman? Who is the marrying kind of woman?

And upfront, let me just say this and this conditions and qualifies everything that's going to follow. We understand that the best of Christian women are just forgiven sinners. We understand that there can be Christian women with very sordid pasts that they've turned from and that Christ has forgiven them of their sins just like everyone else of us. We all come to the cross with sins that need to be forgiven, with a sinful nature that needs to be changed by the Holy Spirit, and so we are not expecting perfection from anyone because we know that that is an unrealistic standard, it is an unfair standard, it is a burden that is

more than anyone could bear because we all stumble in many ways, the book of James says. So we all, we corporately approach this subject with hopefully a sanctified sense of humility, recognizing that we are looking for patterns, we are looking for character traits and understanding that some of those may only be in embryonic form but that it's still there, something to be recognized as something that is there that can be developed over the course of a lifetime. And the other thing that I would say to qualify the start of this message is this, is that weaknesses in a particular area are not necessarily disqualifying. The question is what are the attitudes toward the sinful weaknesses, what are the attitudes toward where you fall short, is it in indifference and an unwillingness to change, or is it something that has a tender heart of saying, "I want to be more like Christ. I see where I fall short. I want to be more like Christ." And if an attitude, heart attitude is like that, there's much to be worked with.

So with those things in mind and that kind of setting, let's start it here. I'm assuming, I am presupposing the most important part of the whole discussion and I should spend time discussing this but I'm just going to presuppose it. I'm presupposing that we are talking about a genuine Christian woman who has genuinely been born again by the Spirit of God, who has similar doctrinal convictions with the man who is interested in her. No Christian man has any business marrying a woman who is not a Christian. He has no business marrying a woman who has much different doctrinal convictions than he has because Scripture says, "How are two to walk together unless they are agreed?" And for a young couple, it is just so vital to be of a like mind spiritually because if you have children, you need to be raising them from a common perspective, imparting common convictions, not conflicting convictions because mom and dad see important things in a different way. So that is primary and I am merely presupposing it for the sake of time, but at least we've touched that base and made clear how important it is.

I would say this to the young men of Truth Community Church, a woman who does not have a high view of Scripture, that it is the inspired and inerrant word of God, a woman who does not have some kind of fundamental conviction about the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men and in the salvation of souls, a woman like that is not the marrying kind of woman for a serious Christian man, at least not yet, and there should be no pursuing a relationship until that's previously established in the woman's heart. So young men, I just encourage you with all of my heart to not be in a hurry, not to try to push a relationship beyond what it is ready to do, and not to expect more from a woman than what her doctrinal convictions can support and can sustain over a long time. It's just so important, I've said this before and I don't mind repeating myself, it is just so important to have these convictions beforehand, before you are in the relationship so that you are guided by conviction and not by your feelings. And you young parents with toddlers and preteens at your knee, you have a great opportunity to teach them these things and condition them in this way over time so that when they approach marrying age, they've already thought through all of these things and are not making decisions simply in response to hormones and emotions that are guaranteed to lead people astray if the Lord doesn't spare them the consequences of their own foolishness.

So it's very important for us to deal with these things earnestly and while the biblical standard, I believe, is high, that shouldn't surprise us, marriage is a high and lofty institution, it's an institution that reflects the love between Christ and his church, and so of course the standard is high and the standard is high despite how marriage is on a downgrade in our modern culture. I understand that cohabitation is the preferred relationship of choice these days but that's not the biblical standard and we aspire after what the word of God calls us to and beckons us to, not simply to be conformed to the world. The Bible tells us very clearly in the book of Romans, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and respectable and perfect, acceptable and perfect," not respectable. It is respectable but that's just not what the verse says. So we come to have Scripture teach us. We come to humble ourselves before the word of God and what we're going to do and answering this question, what should you consider, what should a young man or even an older man perhaps who is, you know, later in life getting married, considering marriage, what should you consider to see if a woman is ready for marriage to you as a Christian man? What should you consider?

These are important matters of the heart and of life and we turn again to the book of Ruth and I'm going to give you five questions to ask, five questions not only to ask of yourself but to ask of those that are in a position to give you counsel, to give you help, to give you loving encouragement, and to not simply rely only on your own opinion about the matter but to be willing to receive observations from others who care about you and might be able to alert you to things that you are overlooking all in the assumption that we're doing these things in a spirit of love, seeking God's will, seeking to honor Christ, and seeking what is best for the couple themselves. We do no one any favors, we do no one any favors if we encourage a couple toward marriage that is not ready for it. We do no one any favors if we tell them and encourage them to simply follow their emotions without having earnestly dealt with these important biblical matters. So this is a great opportunity for us to be able to consider these things together. Five questions that I would encourage every young man to ask in the context of counsel with others.

Question number 1. We're going to look at the book of Ruth here. Question number 1: how does she deal with adversity? How does she deal with adversity? How does she respond to trials when they come in her life? And Ruth helps us see this and gives us a perspective on it. Ruth, you will remember, was a widow before she came to the people of Israel. She had already lost a husband before she met Boaz, and I encourage you to look at Ruth 1:4 and 5 as we get into the text now. You remember that Elimelech had two sons by Naomi, and in verse 4, those sons,

4 ... 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. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died [their father having previously been deceased], and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

Meaning Naomi had lost her husband and now she had lost her only two sons, and so she is in a place of adversity herself and Naomi is in a foreign land, she's living with two daughters-in-law in a time where society was much more patriarchal and male-oriented than it is today, and the hardship and the sorrow must have been severe. Ruth is living in a household with a grieving widow and a grieving mother. She's got a sister-in-law by marriage that she is with. But what you want to see from the text is this as we're going to go along, you'll see that Ruth did not quit living. She developed the situation and the relationships that she had and we see that as we go along in the book of Ruth. Ruth despite being a widow, despite being weighed down no doubt with sorrow, despite being weighed down with grinding poverty, as we will see, she did not quit living but she fulfilled the responsibilities that were in front of her and she showed loyalty and love to the people that were around her.

So as you ask this question, how does she deal with adversity, I would encourage you, I would encourage a young man to find out, "You know, what kind of trials have you met in the past? How did you respond to that? Tell me about it." And what you're looking for is this, is this a woman that lives in past regret and bitterness or sorrow and that's where her mind is occupied? Does she hold grudges against those that have wronged her? Or does she move forward in life, does she look ahead, does she meet present responsibilities and trust the Lord for what lies ahead? That's a very important question because, my friends, speaking to you young people and this is, you know, this is no secret, but adversity in your life and adversity in your marriage is inevitable. We live in a fallen world. Man is born for trouble, Job 5:7 says, like the sparks fly upward. It is just natural that we are going to have trouble and difficulty in life and to the extent that you can know these things in advance, you want to have a sense of how this woman has responded to past adversity because that is a clue to what her response to future adversity will be.

So that's question number 1: how does she deal with adversity? Let's come to a second question that we'll spend more time on here: does this woman demonstrate loyalty? Does she demonstrate loyalty? It's possible that the book of Ruth is best known for Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, her mother-in-law. And I want to read an extended portion of chapter 1 here now. The narrative is engaging and is certainly worthy of our time. Ruth 1:8. Actually, let's just start in verse 6.

6 Then [Naomi] arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food.

They were in poverty and they needed to be someplace where there was something to eat, literally something to sustain their physical life. That's how bad it was. So in verse 7, Naomi

7 ...departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law [these two young women are being tested by what she says here], Naomi said to her two daughters-in-

law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her [both daughters-in-law at this point] they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

She's saying, "I have absolutely nothing to offer to you. I have no other family that you might be able to find for a family of your own." So Naomi in sincere concern for them in verse 12 says,

12 Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait until they were grown [would you wait another 20 years for family]? Would you therefore refrain from marrying?

Naomi tells them and is trying to persuade them with the practical practicalities of it, telling them to look beyond their emotions and look at the reality of the situation. She says in the middle of verse 13,

No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

So she's made her case and she's told them, "Look, you have no further obligation to me. I want you to go back to your people. I want you to find a home and a husband of your own and I can't offer you any of that. I'm simply going back to my people and you do not have to go with me. Don't feel obligated in that way." And in verse 14, it's a very emotional scene, verse 14,

14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

Orpah, in other words, kissed Naomi goodbye and went back in accordance with Naomi's counsel, and now it's only Naomi and Ruth, and Naomi says, "See, your own sister-in-law has left. You need to do what she is doing. Go back. Go back. Go back with your sister-in-law. I have nothing to offer to you." Look at verse 16,

16 But Ruth said, "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. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

This is profound loyalty that she is expressing. She understands that there is nothing visibly ahead of her except grinding poverty with a woman who is a widow too old to be married herself, and yet her loyalty to this woman is so great and so deep that she is willing to sacrifice her life for her, and to lay down her own hopes and expectations so that she can be with her, that they can share life and worship together, and that she can be with her and care for this woman who has shown such care for her over the prior decade or more. It's remarkable. Finally in verse 18 Naomi gives in and,

18 When [Naomi] saw that [Ruth] was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

She yielded but only in the face of astounding loyalty from Ruth. So in verse 19,

19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem.

They were back in the Promised Land again for the Jews. Now here's the thing about all of this story, this loyalty, is that unbeknownst to Ruth, unbeknownst to her situation at the time, there were people who took notice of this story as it was reported to them when they got back to Bethlehem. Ruth entered into life with a reputation now for stunning loyalty that caught the attention of others around.

Look at Ruth 2. Ruth and Boaz have met. Boaz has promised kindness and protection to her. And in verse 10, Ruth fell on her face, this is chapter 2, verse 10,

10 [Ruth] fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

She's not only loyal, she's profoundly humble. "Why would you show kindness to me?"

11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, 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.

Her sincere loyalty – this is so important – which was utterly without calculation, there was no calculation in her loyalty at the time, as far as she knew she was giving up her life for the sake of faithfulness to Naomi and though she had no calculation in it, the Lord blessed, the Lord gave direction, the Lord called it to the attention of others, and she developed this reputation as a woman of exemplary character. This was someone special as shown by the fact that she manifested loyalty to a woman who could do her no good in the midst of adversity. That's character. Now that's some serious biblical, godly character.

So when we consider this today, when we bring those observations forward to today, you know, what I encourage young men to ask as they're contemplating a relationship with a

young woman, make these observations. Ask questions quietly not just of her but of those who know her, those who have observed, those with life experience who are able to speak to these things with some manner of mature perspective. Ask questions like this: is she someone who's faithful to her family? Is she someone who is faithful to her friends? Is she someone who is faithful to her church and the body of believers with which she identifies? Remember we're speaking in grace and compassion here but we're speaking knowing that so much is at stake for future generations in the matters that we're considering here today. These are weighty matters even though we consider them in the power and love of the Holy Spirit. Is she faithful to her family, friends and church? Or does she leave broken relationships in her wake? Does she support her friends and family in their times of difficulty? Or is she nowhere to be found in their time of crisis? How does this woman speak about her father? How does she speak about her parents? Because you're getting a clue as you ask and answer those kinds of questions, you're getting a clue to how she responds to biblically, God-ordained relationships. A woman who speaks well of her father, maybe the man has been a real shoe, a real pain, maybe her father has not been a good man, but is there something there that speaks of forgiveness, something that speaks of compassion over his lost soul, something that says, "Oh, I wish it could be better"? Or is it filled with venom and bitterness and resentment? Because the whole spirit of Christianity is one of forgiveness. The whole spirit of Christianity is understanding that we have been forgiven, therefore we forgive those around us. Does she show any kind of impulse like that? How does she respond when someone corrects her? When someone offers her counsel, how does she respond? Does she receive it or does she reject it and resent it? All of these questions giving you a sense of perspective on her life and the way that she responds to loyalty, to relationships that are established, how she responds to people that care about her, these things matter. We're looking for something that says this woman show signs of loyalty that you can trust.

Look at Proverbs 31 and, of course, the whole last section of Proverbs 31 would be a fitting text for a message like this as well, but in verses 10 through 12 it says this, "An excellent wife, who can find?" This apparently is not an easy task. Where do you find a woman like this? Solomon recognized the challenge in his day 3,000 years ago. He says, "For 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." This is a picture of the godly wife, the godly woman, and this loyalty is the leading aspect that Solomon gives, this ability to be able to trust in her is one of the leading aspects. Well, isn't it obvious that it's one of the things that you would look for clues about as you're considering a woman for marriage because chances are that if a woman is disloyal in the context of her existing relationships, no matter what she says with her mouth, that's a clue to your future as well.

So men, I encourage you, I ask you, I beg you, I exhort you, whatever verb you prefer to have inserted right there, I encourage you to think well because her past is a clue to your future. Now thirdly, a third question that we can ask. How does she deal with adversity? Does she demonstrate loyalty? Thirdly, does she demonstrate industry? Does she demonstrate industry? Is she an industrious woman, which we're just using a fancy term for is she a hard worker? Is she a worker or not? Ruth, in this way, was exemplary.

Look at chapter 2 again, verse 7, and actually go back up even further to chapter 2, verse 2 to set the context a little better.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz,

Ruth took initiative, rather than looking for someone else to provide for her, Ruth went out to work with her own hands in the most menial and backbreaking kind of labor in order to provide for her own table and for the table of Naomi. So she goes out and remember, she has no idea at this point that she's going to run into Boaz. She just thinks that she's getting tonight's bread with the work that she's doing. She wasn't angling for a man here, she was in her circumstances and she looked at her responsibility and said, "I've got to work here so that Naomi and I can have something to eat."

Now in verse 7, she came, the servant is telling Boaz what Ruth said when she arrived, she told us,

7 "... 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'

She would go behind and pick up the grain that kind of fell off as the others were doing the main harvest. So she's just kind of doing cleanup behind them for their own sake. Verse 7,

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, still speaking of Ruth, chapter 2, verse 17,

17 [Ruth] gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

So she's beating this and swinging whatever the harvest tool is to break up the grain so that it could be useful to her. In verse 23,

23 So she 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.

This woman is out working under the sun doing this labor. She is industrious. She is a hard worker. She is willing to do what it takes to provide for her own needs and for those around her.

Now in Proverbs 31, you see similar traits being extolled. Go back to Proverbs 31 here so that you see that I'm not just making this up and making mountains out of mole hills from a narrative portion of Scripture. Proverbs 31:13, "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 considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong." We see this picture of a hard-working woman here and, men, having known women who didn't show this trait before marriage and continued it into marriage, not in my immediate family, of course, but you want to consider the question and ask yourself in a sober way, is this woman going to be willing to share her part of the load or will you be carrying her load along with what you have to do as well? Is she a worker? Was she a worker before you met her? Was she a worker before she heard this message? You know, it's a little too late to cover up now, ladies.

So you want to know is this a woman who can face adversity because adversity is inevitable. Is this a woman who shows loyalty because you need a woman who is going to stand beside you and be with you throughout whatever years the Lord gives to you. Is this a woman who is willing to work and to do her part because if she's not now, you're going to end up doing both and then you have to ask yourself, is that the kind of life that I want? You have to ask yourself is that what I want to inherit as my portion, that I want to do my job and work my job and then also come home and do her part as well? You need to ask that question. Now fourthly, does she demonstrate modesty? Does she demonstrate modesty? Now as I ask this question, I'm asking more than simply what kind of clothes does she wear, although that's an important part of it. You need to consider how a woman likes to project herself to the world around her. You know, we all understand, you know, for the adults anyway, we're all men in here, we're all ladies in here and we understand that exposed portions of the body can attract attention really easily. So we understand that and what we're asking is whether the woman that's under consideration here stands against that, stands outside that cultural trend, stands apart from that worldly perspective and carries herself differently in a way that is keeping with a claim of being a Christian and being a woman of God? But while we're asking that question, it's far more than simply a matter of clothing. How does she carry herself? What is her personality like? Is she a boastful woman? A loud outspoken woman? Speaking of self, speaking of matters pertaining to herself, or is there a softness to her character? A woman who knows how to carry herself in the presence of others?

Look at Ruth 2:10. When we speak about modesty here, Boaz was speaking to Ruth and he said in verse 9,

9 ...I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

And look at Ruth's response.

10 ... she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

There's this utter modesty. "Who am I, Boaz, that you would show kindness to me? What is there about me that you would show such love and care and attention to?" And in that she prefigures the Christian response to Christ, "Who am I, O Lord, that You would show this love of redemption and give it to me? Why would You show love to me, a sinner who has fallen short of Your glory, a rebel against Your commands?" And there's this modesty and there is this humility that says, "I'm not entitled to this. Why such kindness to me?"

Now listen, men, a carnal woman may have a lot of fleshly appeal at the beginning. We're all adults here, except for those who are children, we're all adults here and we all get that. We all get that a carnal woman may have fleshly appeal at the beginning. A loud woman as you're getting to know her, as you're dating, a loud woman may make for a night full of laughs but as a pattern of marriage, as the woman that will be entrusted with the primary responsibility for raising your children, I just tell you, I'd encourage you to think twice before you jump into the deep end of that pool. A woman who dresses in a way that appeals to you before you're married and excites your carnal lust, oh, men, she's on display for everybody. She's open to everybody when she dresses like that, not just you. Think carefully, men, be careful and don't simply trust and yield to the hormones that are driving your physical desires in youth because that has consequences down the road, and what you want down the road is a godly woman, not a carnal woman, because this woman is going to be the one who shapes so much of the atmosphere of your home.

So think twice, you know, and just to give a parallel text or a cross-reference here, look over at 1 Timothy 2. This issue of modesty is biblical. This is not the rantings of an old guy who preferred the traditional way of life. This is biblical and all of the fleshly appeal of the world in which we live, men and ladies alike, we need to recognize it for what it is as part of a world system engineered and energized by the devil and separate ourselves from it, and to reject it and to embrace a different standard that is pleasing to the Christ whom we claim as Lord.

1 Timothy 2:9, the Apostle Paul who is speaking exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ wants him to say here says, "Likewise, 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, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness." It's almost like before Paul wrote that section, it's almost like he read the book of Ruth and then started and picked up his pen and started writing again in the things that we say. She adorns herself modestly with good works as a woman who makes a claim of the Lord.

So does she have modesty? What's her personality like? It's so easy to be misunderstood in a message like this. It's okay for a woman to be talkative. It's okay for her to be one who speaks freely. We're not talking about just the fact that someone is naturally talkative

but what do they talk about and how do they talk when they talk? These are the things that you need to examine and consider.

Fifthly and finally we ask this question: does she show respect? Does she show respect? Does she show respect to you? Does she show respect to those in authority? Does she show respect to those who are older in life? Does she show respect? Ruth addressed Boaz with honor and with a sense of humility, with a sense of gratitude. Ruth 2:13 she said,

13 ... "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."

Such gentleness. Such deference. Such recognition of kindness that was shown to her and this is something that flavors her interactions broadly, not just with you. You really do want to know how a woman addresses her father in private. You really want to know that. That's important because a marrying kind of woman has a biblical responsibility to respect her husband. Scripture is clear about this. Go back to Ephesians 5. Of course, we know that Scripture says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord," in verse 22. The husband is the head of the wife, Christ the head of the church and so on. Look down at verse 33, "Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

Now the Apostle Peter spoke to this principle as well in 1 Peter 3. Turn back there with me. I want your eyes to fall on these texts. 1 Peter 3:1. Men, you want to see if there is a pattern of this kind of attitude in the woman that you are considering. 1 Peter 3:1, "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 see it? Do you see this principle of modesty, this principle of deference, respect, submission? Now look, I understand when a guy is in his late teens, early 20s, that, let's put it this way, there's more attraction to a big bonfire someplace than there is to a quiet fireplace in the living room. The grabbing attention that a loud, boisterous, rebellious personality can bring to a young man at the start, I get that there is an attraction to that and moths are attracted to the flame. I don't think that's necessarily a good thing for being in your self-interest. The quiet gentleness of a godly character is what you want to ask God to give you a heart to appreciate, esteem, and to bring you a woman like that. That's what you want, men.

Now as I said last week as we talked about the men, as I said at the beginning of our message here this morning, we say here also again these five issues that we've laid out here and illustrated for you, these are guiding principles. These are not standards of perfection that we expect from every woman, these are the direction of life. These are heart attitudes, that the spirit in which they are presented fully embraces the fact that a woman has a lot of growing to do, fully embraces the fact that she may have sin in her past that doesn't necessarily disqualify her from marriage, especially if she had a life of sin before she came to Christ. You know, we operate on the past, that when we come to Christ, the past is forgiven and we don't hold that against them. What we're talking about

here is someone that we are assuming is a professing Christian and asking whether their lifestyle manifests a direction toward holiness that is consistent with that profession, and that's a legitimate question to ask and it is important to have specific follow-up questions to ask to be able to measure that in an objective way. They're guiding principles but, men, be realistic, be fair. She is a sinner just like you are. She needs to grow just like you do. Don't demand perfection when you're not perfect yourself. The only perfect one in our realm of existence is the Lord Jesus Christ, all the rest of us fall short of that and this woman under your consideration needs the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ applied to her and to cleanse her from sin just like you do. So we're not asking with a proud pompous air, we're asking in a spirit of humble earnestness that says these things matter.

Now I addressed this a couple of weeks ago but I'm going to repeat myself just for the sake of importance in this message. You'll notice that, if you're thinking about it, you'll notice that I have not said anything about the matter of physical attraction except the carnal kind that's sinful and needs to be avoided for the sake of godliness. I haven't said anything about the nature of physical attraction up until now at all, and because I think that people's minds get off track on this in a well-intentioned but very misguided way, I want to ask and answer this question. Should Christians, male and female, should Christians include physical attraction in their consideration of a potential mate? Is that a legitimate part of the discussion, a legitimate part of the consideration in a relationship that can possibly lead to marriage, or is that unspiritual? Should we just ignore that and just focus entirely on what we read in the Bible and how much we pray each day, and just have a super-spiritual approach to it? Well, the way I framed the question suggests my answer. Of course in a culture like ours that does not arrange marriage but the man and the woman have a say if not, you know, a decisive voice in the matter, in a culture like that, of course physical attraction is part of the consideration. Physical intimacy in marriage is a biblical responsibility, duty and gift, 1 Corinthians 7, and you should be honest enough to ask yourself do I want that person in that way? Stated differently and maybe even more applicable to the ladies as they are contemplating this, do you want that man to have you? Do you want that man to have free access to you with no barriers whatsoever? Do you want that? This is not the most critical factor, that's why I haven't said anything about it until now. Those other five are far more important but this is an important factor.

Marriage, when a couple walks down the aisle, when a couple is contemplating and giving those vows, it is a culmination of a determination that they have made to one another that says, "I want to give myself completely to you without qualification, without reservation until death do us part." If you are going to make that kind of public statement and those kinds of relational representations to another person, you need to be honest. You have to be honest about this. If, and I say this gently and I say this to help you, if you recoil at the thought of intimacy, if that just, "Oh, no, the way his chin hangs down from his jaw just drives me insane and I just cannot stand to look at that." Well, you know, you've got to factor that in. If you recoil at the thought of intimacy, you're not being realistic with yourself and you are being horribly unfair to your potential mate because if your potential mate is unaware that you feel that way, he's going into it thinking that,

"You want me," when inside you're saying to yourself, "I don't want him." I ask this question many times in many different ways in premarital counseling so that there is no mistake and there is no lack of clarity about the importance of it. If you are not honest, if you enter into marriage with that kind of reservation, your deception is, I'll say it this way, I believe your deception is a sin against God and it is a terribly awful, fraud to commit upon the man that you say you'll marry or the woman that you say you will marry because your lack of transparency both before and in those times of intimacy are going to cause a lot of hurt. So spare everybody the hurt and just be honest if that's the way that you feel about it. Better to be alone and to let another person be alone than to perpetrate a deception that will cause harm and hurt at the deepest possible level that a human relationship can be experienced at. So don't do that.

Now at the same time, men, at the same time I'd like to put it this way, be realistic. Be realistic. That potential mate may not be a movie star but do you know what? You're not going to Hollywood either. You're not a 10 star catch yourself. In most cases, a Christian marrying kind of man and a Christian marrying kind of woman will have a natural physical attraction to one another that flows from their deeper shared spiritual values, and the spirituality of the reality of intimacy is driven by broader, deeper, spiritual commitments and convictions that create a natural attraction to one another. It's not simply a matter of physical beauty. You know, physical beauty is all going to be passing away given enough time. So my encouragement to you while I have emphasized this is don't overthink it. Focus on becoming, don't overthink that aspect of physical attraction. If you just say, "Yeah, I like her. You bet I like her." You know, that's all we're saying.

To young men and young women, I encourage you with this: Christ is Lord, Christ knows your desires, Christ will fulfill your desires in his time. He's ordained your life before the foundation of the world. He loved you and demonstrated his own love for you when he gave his life up on the cross when he died for sinners just like you, so trust Christ. Don't run shortcuts across wisdom because you don't trust him and you think that life is getting along too far for you to wait any longer. Simply focus on becoming the marrying kind of man, the marrying kind of woman in your own heart and trust the Lord to bring the marrying kind opposite in his time because the one who died for your soul and purchased eternity for you surely has your earthly good in mind as well. Give yourself to Christ and let him lead you as he sees fit.

Let's pray together.

Father, we've spoken about such practical matters at the heart. We're grateful that the word of God addresses them. We pray for those who are married, Father, that You would refresh them in the spirit of marriage that You would have it to be. We pray for those that desire marriage and yet are waiting, Father, that You would grant them patience and that You would sanctify them in the truth, and help them to be seekers of God in this, help them to be seekers of wisdom because You give wisdom to all who ask and You give it generously and without reproach. And Father, for those parents that are training up little ones, help them in the process. The days are getting darker and the sun is setting on so many of these cherished things from Your word. Father, let the Christians homes

represented here be part of that which keep the home fires burning, that keep the light of this kind of virtue burning and shining so that there would be a distinct people to Your glory and honor living these things out in the quiet nature of day to day life. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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