

## HOW TO TAKE A WIFE IN PURITY

9/18/2011

Gen. 2:18-25

INTRO: I did not originally plan this to be several messages, but it as I began to develop my thoughts, I felt it needed more than one message. It seems, every time I do a series, I say, "This is a very important subject." So, once more I say, "Now, this is a very important subject." When I did the series on "Wine and the Bible", I had preached on a subject the devil has attacked me for many times. When the folk in Mexico requested that I do these messages I Low German, they also began to experience that opposition.

When I was there I said that here is the picture I see. We, as pastors seek to protect the flock from harm. That is a shepherd's task. And when we see the devil has opened a hole in the wall or the roof of our church, we seek to shut it. But many churches have a huge hole in the roof and the devil can reach right in and take this one here and that one there, and we do nothing about patching the hole. When we do try to do something it creates such a tidal wave against us, we lay down the battle.

There is a window in life that is very treacherous because of the way God created man and woman to procreate. And here the devil does tremendous damage in the lives of young people. And I believe many marriages are ruined because of this brief time of life and it is that time of life when we become interested in the opposite gender until we are married.

I did have difficulty with the title. I had about five titles but finally settled on this one, "How to take a wife in purity." Now I want you to notice that when I call it, "How To Take a Wife I Purity", I have placed the responsibility of this subject on the man. The passage I will take for this later, does the same. I believe God does the same. However, much of what I will say will apply to the ladies as well.

Here is our question in these messages; How are we, as Gentiles, to take a wife in purity? We do not betroth, as was done in Jewish culture. How are we, as Gentiles, to take a wife in purity? What does the Bible say? Does

the Bible address this matter? Is there a prescribed method in the Bible? Is the way it is done in our culture right? Or is it wrong?

In these messages I plan to cover five points. We want to identify the main problem in taking a wife in purity. Then we want to look at the major processes or methods of taking a wife. Then I want to give you a parable to show how difficult it is for most young men to take a wife in purity. Then we want to look at a passage of Scripture that will spell out the principles for us on how to take a wife in purity. Then I want to give you a five point plan but a plan on how to take a wife in purity. This is not a five point peace plan, but a five point *purity* plan.

Now, you see, from the title, "How To Take A Wife In Purity", we are putting the onus of a pure relationship on the young man, not the young lady. A lady does not normally take a husband. It is the man that takes a wife, thus the major responsibility of taking a wife in purity falls to the man. However, much of what we will talk about will apply directly to the young lady as well.

#### I. THE PROBLEM OF ACQUIRING A WIFE IN PURITY

And so, the very first thing I want to talk about is the problem of acquiring a wife in purity. Let me outline for you three important points for young people. The first important point in the time a young person is when that young person begins to become interested in the opposite gender. I would call this the point of 'attraction'. There has begun to grow, in this young person, an interest in the opposite gender. The second important point is the time when that young person gets 'attached' to someone of the opposite gender. By attachment I mean emotionally attached. We call it falling in love. The third important point is the time of 'acquisition', the wedding day; the day this young man acquires a wife. So you know that the length of time from each point to the next will vary from person to person. And the problem we want to address is the purity problem between the time when attraction to the opposite gender takes place until the

wedding day. The purity problem is the most intense between the time when a person gets attached to one of the opposite gender until the time you get attached to that person in marriage.

You see, we have come to the conclusion, in our culture, that taking a wife in purity is not possible. So we have succumbed to the idea that impurity, at least to some extent, will happen, and so we have resolved that we will do it as best we can. We, as parents, do not expect full purity, since many of us were not capable of remaining fully pure ourselves. However, we do have one expectation, and that is that there will not be a premature pregnancy. And if that is avoided, that is good enough for us. Touching, petting, kissing? yes, we expect that will happen. But may it not go beyond that. And now I would like to give you all a piece of paper and have you write on there, 'Yes, purity to such an extent is possible and should be expected' or 'No, purity to such an extent is not possible, it is too much to expect.' I ask you, is it possible? I want to recommend it is, but help is needed.

Now I am speaking for us, in our culture. In other cultures, especially multi-cultured societies, not only is purity a major concern regarding marriage, but the permanence of the marriage is a great concern as well. To those in other societies who will listen to these messages, it may come as a surprise that permanence of marriage is fully expected among us. We view this as so serious that we will excommunicate those who divorce and remarry. Let me speak to those folk for a moment and tell them why marriage lasts among our folk. It is because we truly believe that marriage is for life; not ideally, but really. We do not tolerate divorce in the church. We believe that a person who divorces and remarries another while the first partner is alive is living in constant adultery and will not inherit eternal life.

And so, the major problem I want to address for us, is how to chart the temptation laden waters,

or the treacherous shoals of life between the points we have mentioned. For others, that problem has the added problem of the great potential for divorce after marriage. The reason the purity problem before marriage is so serious is the fact that fornication is a major sin against God and man. The reason the problem of divorce is such a big problem is that extramarital affairs or divorce and remarriage constitutes adultery, and that is the major sin of adultery. It is a huge sin against both God and man. One is the sin of fornication and the other is the sin of adultery. Both are major sins, which if lived in as a chosen life style, will condemn that person to everlasting hell. And the sins of fornication and adultery both have very, very bad after affects for mankind. That is why this subject is such a very big deal.

Now let me make one point here. When I speak of the purity problem I am talking about the problem of falling into sin with someone of the opposite gender. And this sin, in the Bible, is called fornication. This same sin for married people is called adultery. Now the best way to avoid the sin of fornication is to get married (1 Cor. 7:2). But our question is how to avoid fornication before marriage.

Now let me say this at the outset. Some people believe that *pornea*, the NT word for fornication means physical immorality of the married as well as the unmarried. This interpretation then gives license to divorce in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. So look at this word in Matthew 5:32 (read). Here the word '*pornea*' has been translated as 'sexual immorality' in the NKJV. The KJV translates it as 'fornication', and that, I believe is correct. Fornication is a narrow term, 'sexual immorality' is a broad term. If the NKJV interpretation is correct, then the word '*pornea*' is a broad term covering all kinds of physical immorality. But a careful study of this word in 1 Corinthians 6 and Galatians 5 does not allow this term to be translated as a broad term.

So, the problem we are addressing in these messages is the purity problem. And with that, we want to take a brief look at the various ways of taking a wife that are practiced.

## II. THE PROCESSES OF ACQUIRING A WIFE

### A. Parental Choice

We begin then by considering first the method of taking a wife which is by parental choice. The system of taking a wife used in Bible times, for the most part, was that which we call the betrothal system. I did not know until recently that the Romans of NT times used the betrothal system as well. I took some of the following from an internet article. In the Hebrew culture the families often arranged the marriage (Gen. 21:1; 38:6). Sometimes the groom selected the bride and had the family arrange it (Judges 14:2). In Genesis 24:58, the family sought the consent of the daughter. There was occasion where romantic attractions determined whom one would marry, as in the case of Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:20).

However, in the Jewish culture, usually the parents chose a bride for their sons. An agreement between parents could happen when the children were very young yet. Then about a year before marriage, an agreement was made and the dowry price agreed upon. This was the dowry price for the bride. Then the son went back home with his dad and there he prepared a place for his bride. About a year or so later, plans were set for the wedding after which the groom would go with his wedding party to get her. She usually did not know when he would be there so she was ready well in advance and happily left home with him at whatever time he came for her, even if it was at midnight. He then took her back to his parents home, where the marriage took place and was consummated. Usually it was an event of several days and it was a joyous occasion. Go with me to Matthew 25 for part of a process like this as described there. We will read verses 1-13.

For kings, marriages were often nothing but political alliances. The Song of Solomon in 6:8 talks about 60 queens. Then it mentions 80 concubines. This is not particularly relevant for our subject here and we move on to the next method.

#### B. Personal Romance

The second method of taking a wife, the one we are most familiar with, is that of personal romance. We call it falling in love. Have you ever wondered why we call it 'falling' in love? I think it is because it is something that happens to us. It is when we are drawn or attracted to a person of the opposite gender and we desire to have that person. We fall in love and we seem hopeless to remedy it. We have fallen and can't get up. Johnny Cash described it as falling into a ring of fire from which you cannot seem to escape. Sometimes it may be a false alarm, but many times it ends up in the formation of life-long relationships as husband and wife.

In the Bible, we have some examples of this. When Jacob met Rachel at the well, he fell in love with her. You will remember the story. Rebecca feared for Jacob's life because of the wrath of his brother Esau. And she spoke to Isaac and they sent Jacob to Laban to take a wife in that area. And when Jacob arrived there he came to Laban's well, and Laban's daughter Rachel came to water the sheep and Isaac rolled the stone from the well and watered the sheep for her. So Jacob began to work for Laban and Laban eventually asked Jacob what wages he desired. So let us turn to Genesis 29 (read 15-18). Jacob loved Rachel. Here is personal romance. This is falling in love.

There is another story of this kind of marriage. Samsom fell in love with a woman at Timnath (Judges 14:1-3), and he ended up marrying her. Then there is the story of Boaz and Ruth and Solomon and the Shulamite. It is my view that the Song of Solomon is a book on marriage. And the method of taking a wife portrayed in the book is

that of romance. Solomon fell in love with a farm girl. It is the romance of romances. It is called the 'Song of Songs'. The very first words are , "The song of songs, which is Solomon's." Now I cannot understand why God used Solomon to write this book. However that may be, in my view, when he met the Shulamite, he fell in love for the very first time. He already had sixty queens and eighty concubines. I say, I do not understand why God used this man to write this book. But it may be this, that here, in this experience with the Shulamite he learned, for the very first time what true love is like, and that here he learned that one woman for one man for life is God's ideal. However that may be, he fell into such a burning ring of fire, that he could not escape it, and he married this farm girl.

Now in this method of taking a wife, that is personal romance, there are two further methods that have developed. Today we differentiate between them as courting and dating.

#### 1. Courting

So, let us begin with courting. One of the things gravely lacking in searching through this subject of methods of taking a wife is clear definitions. What is courting? What is dating? What you will find is a serious lack of definition and those who do define it, define it in terms of what they think it is or what they think it should be.

I took the following definition from Wikipedia. They write, "**Courtship** is the period in a couple's relationship which precedes their [engagement](#) and [marriage](#), or establishment of an agreed relationship of a more enduring kind. In courtship, a couple get to know each other and decide if there will be an engagement or other such agreement. A courtship may be an informal and private matter between two people or may be a public affair, or a formal arrangement with family approval. Traditionally, in the case of a formal engagement, it has been perceived

that it is the role of a male to actively "court" or "woo" a female, thus encouraging her interest in him and her receptiveness to a proposal of marriage. Within many western societies, these distinct gender roles have lost some of their importance and rigidity. Courtship may include the couple going out together in public, (often known as [dating](#)), for a [meal](#), [movie](#), [dance](#), [sports](#) or other social activity. Courtship may also involve private activities which usually include much talking together, perhaps by [telephone](#) or by electronic means such as [text messages](#) or [e-mail](#). There is often exchange of letters, gifts, flowers and songs."

You can tell that is a secular definition. Courting used to be the way Gentiles in English families took a wife. This was the method used in Mennonite homes as well. It was called 'shput'tsieren forun', to go visiting. The young man would go to the young lady's home and see her there. I'm not sure how that developed into dating, but it did. Maybe it was modern transportation that helped to that. However, today, the courting method is being revived by some concerned parents. The dating method became so dangerous with regard to purity, that concerned parents, seeking ways to bring purity back into the picture have gone back to courting. And with that, we are back to 'shput'tsieren forun'.

However, I took a definition of courtship from an internet article written by a Christian. Again, this may be a personal view, but this is how this person defined courting, "Courtship takes the position that the two people have no physical contact at all (no touching, no hand-holding, no kissing) until marriage. Many in a courtship relationship will not spend any time together unless family members, preferably parents, are present at all times. In addition, courting couples state up front that their intentions are to see if the other person is



a suitable potential marriage partner. Courtship advocates claim that courtship allows for the two people to truly get to know each other in a more platonic setting without the pressures of physical intimacy or emotions clouding their view."

Let me say this for the courtship of years ago, and that is that physical purity was still a problem. That is true, even today. However, basically, as used in Christian circles today, courting is a parentally guided way to help their children acquire a life partner in a more morally safe manner. When courting is parentally guided, as described by the Christian writer earlier, it is definitely the safer method of taking a wife. In discussing this with my wife, she said that she viewed courting as that method by which the couple was never un-chaperoned. If that could be maintained, it would make everything much safer.

Now let me add some of my own opinion here. Whether you as parents choose to follow the courting method or the dating method, there is something both methods can greatly benefit from. It is this. Since our young people get married at ages in which they have become quite mature, there is one thing that will help all parents no matter which method they will choose or no matter which method the children will choose if they become a little older before they seek a life partner. It is this. If your son or daughter will purpose in his or her own heart to remain pure, that resolve will be a great asset to any concerned parent. As a matter of fact, you can hardly choose a safe enough method for your children, if their own hearts resolve is not very strong. And at the end of these few messages, I want to give all young people an opportunity to commit themselves to purity.

## 2. Dating

The second method of taking a wife in personal romance we call dating. I want us to look at dating under two headings: wide open dating, and parentally guided dating.

a. Wide open

What I call 'wide open' dating, Paul Washer might call recreational dating. So let me set out basically what I believe the difference is. In dating, the young man chooses the girl he wants to see and asks her for a date. He goes to her place or where ever she may be staying and he picks her up and then they go wherever they want and do mostly what they want to do. Many times this is done just for fun or recreation. They are not seriously looking for a life partner. They are exploring and many times exploiting the opposite gender.

Now I want to give a word to young people. Young men, if you date, never ask a girl out for fun. Never! It is a crime in my books. That young woman may have high hopes and you are fooling around. It is very low; very shameful; and very dangerous to both. And young ladies, never accept a date from a young man just for the fun of it. The results for many young ladies is a ruined life! And besides, it is not the way to go about reaping a godly and good marriage.

I would give a word to any Christian parent here as well. If you allow this kind of thing in your home when you are still responsible, that is when your children are still under your roof, you have said, "Devil, here is my child. Take her. Take him." You say, "Pastor, that is very harsh." Answer: Yes.

Dating wide open is what the Apostle Paul describes in a passage we will look at later as the way the heathen take a wife.

And I ask you, what level of intimacy is appropriate before marriage? Sitting close together? Holding hands? These are difficult questions and the answers may be more difficult to maintain than to give. But let me read Ephesians 5:3 for us, "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints..."

b. Parentally guided

The other kind of dating is what I would call parentally guided dating. Parentally guided dating is when the parents set the guidelines for dating. This, of course, generally only applies when the young man or young woman is still living at home. Once they are on their own, things change. So I would see that in parentally guided dating the parents sit down with the young man or young lady and set out the parameters of what is acceptable and what is not for any relationship they form. The major concern is how to safely chart the treacherous shoals of that stage of life between when a person becomes interested in the opposite gender until the day they are married.

We used this method. We sat down with our daughters and their boyfriend and went over that together with them. Let me share one part of those days. One of our daughters asked us once, "Mom, and Dad, now that we have been seeing each other for this amount of time, would it be OK to stay out later than 10:00 in the evening?" And we thought it over and said that we felt that later was dangerous but what we would do is let them come home and spend time with us until 10:30. So we would get out the pop and chips and enjoy a time with them.

Concl: So, closing, let me ask you, what method of taking a wife does the Bible prescribe? Is it betrothal or romance?

If, by biblical we mean which one God sets out as a Biblical requirement, neither method is set out as a requirement. And since betrothal has not yet become a method used among us Gentiles, we ask, what is the biblical method of taking a wife in the personal romantic way? Is it courting, or dating? Again, the Bible does not prescribe either method. As far as I know, the Bible does not set out any precise method, not even the Jewish betrothal system. It does record those but does not say, "Do it like this."

How did the Jews arrive at the betrothal system? I do not know, but of all the systems, the betrothal system is by far the safest, and I suspect that is how the Jews came to that system. After many years of experience with life, I suspect they came to the view that the safest way for a man to take a wife is if he met her for the first or second time the day they got married. But, I doubt the this method would work in a multi cultured society. It is possible the divorce rate might increase, not decrease.

How shall we conclude on this matter of the process of taking a wife in purity? What is the best method? What is the safest method? Betrothal, is the safest method. So, why do we not use it? To go outside of the culture in which one lives is difficult. Since people around us do not use this method, it is hard to expect somebody else's son or daughter to fit into one's method if it is different, and it is very difficult to change a culture. So, what is our next best option? Parentally guided courting. So, why do we not use that method? Same problem. We live in a culture where that is not the accepted norm and the limits for our young people wants to be very narrow. I think though it could be made to work over time. Is there any other option? Well, we chose parentally guided dating. I will leave for my children to decide what will be the wisest choice for them in the future for their children. If they can improve on what we have done, I will say, "Go for it and God bless you!"

However, I do not want to leave this message as though God does not have any advice on this matter. He does have, and quite specific advice to. God does not set out the method, but no matter what method is used, He does set out the manner. He leaves the method to us, but not the manner. No matter which method is used, God has some very specific words on the manner in which a man is to take a wife and we will see this later.

