Mission College
Of Evangelism

Presents

Courtship and Marriage

A Happiness Seminar

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About This Seminar

Through the years, students in my classes have asked me to please put this seminar in writing. For many it has been the first time they have seen the importance of the subject, but more importantly many have seen it as a breath of fresh air feeling that it frankly handles the subject in a way that does not come across as extreme; making sense of the high standards God’s desires for His children. To all of you who encouraged to this end, I dedicate this seminar.

This subject is so serious yet how little we are prepared for this very important almost universal decision. It is my hope and prayer that these few lines of guidance may find meaning and be the catalyst for helping hundreds to a more careful approach and successful partnership; one that heaven can bless and use as a pattern for others.

I make no claims to being a professional in this area or having any right to address this subject. Yet as I observed the activities of my students, their lack of preparation and in some cases, lack of rational behavior in regard to these issues, my heart was moved and burdened to somehow provide them with guiding principles that might give them a better handle on their own lives and guidance towards establishing meaningful relationships My testimony here is born of many years of ministry to hurting young people and couples. I pray it will prove trustworthy, tender, yet strong and rational.

The Author
Chapter 1

Today’s Marital Climate

Nationally, there are as many divorces now as there are marriages each year.¹ This is staggering! To be sure there are pockets of populations that enjoy a better ratio, but unfortunately it can no longer be claimed by churches in general. This means that even though there might be a young person that really wants a “marriage for keeps”, apparently they are not finding the right person to make it happen. More and more, because of so many failed relationships, couples are deciding to not marry—this way there is no question that they are together because of choice. Homosexuality is nearly, if not, as prevalent in some areas today, as in Sodom and Gomorrah. Alternative lifestyles are much more common than we would like to admit

Certainly, we live in a society where “sin abounds”. Our senses are bombarded constantly with the sensual in music, magazine, television, computer, movie, dress, and the list goes on almost infinitum. Even the beauty in the arts is often conflicted with mixed messages and purveyance. Many of the most beautiful places on earth are no longer left to their pristine beauty but rather made hot beds of iniquity.

But let’s not forget—”where sin abounds, Grace doth much more abound!!” Somehow, it is our duty and privilege to so walk our way through this life as to make obvious the beauty and blessing of Godliness. This does not just happen. We must want it, search for it, and follow through when we find it.

Is it worth the effort? We are so prone to failure that we often wonder. But I am still a believer—not in romance, but rather deep, true, abiding charity.

It seems almost criminal that for all these years we have been left to find our way through this maze of relationships by chance. We educate ourselves in one way or another for most any career. We even put more study into buying a car, a home, even joining a church. But for the most binding contract meant to be for life, we just go by feelings. We can do better! I hope you want to do not only better, but also the best for a witness to the world what love and marriage should be. Only as we strive for the best can we hope to find the happiness intended for this most beautiful of all human relationships.

¹. Subject to slight changes
Chapter 2

God’s Interest

God has a supreme interest in this subject. In fact, without the appropriate representation of the human institution of marriage, God is hard pressed to reveal Himself to mankind.

There are several reasons for this.

First, it is intended to be the very best symbol of His character—Love.

- Love seeks to express itself
- Love is selfless
- Love is loyal
- Love is trustworthy
- Love is “Good Judgment”
- Love protects
- Love is a Friend
- Love tells us who God is

Secondly, it is only within the loving “family” relationship that we can really understand the relationship that God wants to have with us. Family tells us who we are to God.

Thirdly, God is interested in our supreme happiness. True happiness cannot exist with even a stroke of selfishness. Only True Love = True Happiness. Therefore happiness should define me, my family, my church, my world, and my universe. As a beautifully cut diamond so is the splendor of the multitudinous facets of Love.

Because we are made to experience things through our senses—God needs to not only speak His truth but he needs us to experience it. There are three areas of experience that are universal—needs that every human being has.

1. Some form of religious worship
2. Food and food cycle
3. Some form of family and the need to procreate our species

God uses the last two to illustrate the truth about the first—Worship. Even in our sin-ridden world, there is born into the heart of every child the desire to know its father or mother. And so within the heart of every person there is a disconnect when we don’t know our Maker—an unexplainable void.

How important it is then, that we understand how to reflect the character of God in our home. God needs our help in conveying to the world who and what He is. He needs you. And if not you—who?

[Any wonder that the enemy of righteousness works so hard to ruin the family?]
Chapter 3

Courtship & Marriage Defined

What is Courtship? I have heard it defined in many different ways—from the prudent to the ridiculous. But I would like to make my own attempt defining this process.

It is the time frame during which “special friends” (man & woman) attempt to mesh their lives mentally, spiritually, socially, and emotionally so tightly that they have achieved a level of intimacy that can sustain the physical component (when appropriate) without unraveling and cheapening the relationship.

So then, what is marriage? Since it is considered to be unconsummated without sexual intercourse, is it appropriate to say:

- Marriage equals “marriage license + wedding + sexual intercourse.”?

Most of us know that there is something wrong with that later definition, but what? Some would argue that this perfectly reflects “arranged marriages” as apparently sanctioned Biblically. So if that is true, then why Courtship?

To be sure, this subject brings up many legitimate questions and sometimes, it seems, not many real legitimate answers. Like so many other subjects, one cannot really address the present without taking a very long and good look at the past. But unlike so many other subjects, rarely—very rarely—does anyone seriously do that. In fact, I think it is safe to say that it is the second most important decision one can make in life and I believe for most, the least thought through and honestly considered. It all seems so left up to fate and chance with so little higher brain activity.

So what of the past? Are there safe guidelines? If so, where? This manual takes a journey into the past to see what has been laid down before. Then we will deal with the present and if safe, take a look unto the future.

It is my prayer that this journey will prove supremely helpful to righting past misjudgments, establishing fresh outlooks, and confidence again in the process called “Courtship and Marriage”.


Must Read


Included:
- Eliminate the Seven Most Prevalent Causes of Faulty Mate Selection
- The decision to get married is made too quickly
- The Decision is made at too young an age
- One or both partners are too eager to get married
- One or both may be choosing a mate to please someone else
- The Experience base is too narrow
- The couple has unrealistic expectations
- One or both may have unaddressed significant personality or behavior problems

**Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts** by Dr. Les Parrott III & Dr. Leslie Parrott
(Seven questions to ask before {and after} you marry)

COURTSHIP — SPIRITUAL CONCEPTS

BEFORE SIN
- Adam & Eve were perfect in the image of God
- So close in heart that they could talk things out
- One flesh—no shame
- No need for a “lord” in the relationship
- Made to procreate perfection for eternity
- Clothed in righteousness

AFTER SIN
- Separation
- Aqueenation (accusation)
- Fear
- Own righteousness
- Adam’s weakness towards women corrected*
- Eve’s weakness in desiring more than her “station” **

**Eve’s Correction—Gen. 3:16
  a. Sorrow in conception
  b. Sorrow in child bearing
  c. Desire to husband
  d. Husband to rule over her

*Adam’s Correction—Gen 3:17-19
  a. Ground cursed for His sake (Now had to “work” for his living)
  b. From dust to dust

MAN AS RULER
- Has to relearn role in harmony with Biblical Principles (Sweat of His Brow)
- Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7
- Needs this position in order to maintain emotional health
- Mentally made to handle “final decision making”—left brained

WOMEN’S SUBMISSIVE ROLE
- Eph. 5:22-24; & 33; Col. 3:18; 1Pet. 3:1-6
- Learn to be truly satisfied with the work of raising children
- Does not preclude a profession—but only after first job satisfied.
- Good example—Proverbs 31
- Naturally more sensitive—more emotional
- Made to think with both sides of brain—excellent input for decision by husband (may seem indecisive)
Chapter 4
God’s Original Plan

Creating the Ideal Home Setting

And God said. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion. Try if you can to imagine yourself there that day. The great Creator God is both a bit more pensive and yet very happy. This is the day! Today he brings into being His children. The Heavenly Father and the Spirit of God along with the hosts of heaven are invited to the scene for all know this act could usher in the Great Plan of Salvation.

Certainly this is not something entered into without thought and Council. We don’t know the time frame, but we do know that there had been Councils before as it was these Councils that upset Lucifer, son of the morning. God saw it differently. For their all-wise reasons, the “created” was not given the opportunity to look inside the dealings of the Godhead. Though I don’t think we are told, I can’t help but wonder if the “created” had the ability to refrain from interfering with the course of “personal choice”. God can and does have foreknowledge without interfering. But it seems a lot to ask of a created being that has never experienced evil and its consequence. Whatever the case, time was given for Lucifer’s horrible rebellion to ripen and the war in heaven to take place.

Yet, “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18) The Creator God could not he afraid to give “children” a chance to choose. He could not stifle the growth of the universe—the expansion of love—just because sin had now gained a footing in the persons of Lucifer (forever thereafter known as Satan) and the angels that fell with him. So the plans went forward.

In anticipation of this great event, the Creator prepared for his children a beautiful world teeming with lovely birds and butterflies, majestic trees, and rolling meadows graced with splashes of color and fadeless flowers. As though this was not enough, the Lord God planted a garden (Gen.4:8 &15) and placed the man in it to dress it. There in the midst of this beautiful home the Lord forms man. How tender the scene.

God did not at first create Eve. Though he states that it is not good for man to be alone, He first creates animals and brings them to Adam to see what he will call them. What an interesting experience! How like a father bringing pleasurable gifts to his son. Adam notices that every animal has a companion “but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” Why do you suppose God planned it this way? Perhaps with the delay Adam had developed somewhat of a longing for a companion uniquely his own. To be sure, from God’s perspective, He was planning to bring Adam the greatest gift heaven could bestow—a wife. (At least that is how it is supposed to work!!)

Perhaps, after naming all the animals and birds, Adam lays out on the green lush meadow to take it all in. And the ‘Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” Gen. 2:21. I can only imagine he is stunned by her beauty both in character and symmetry.

Why the rib? Some would be quick to say because she was to be at his side. Might it have also been that a rib protects the heart, and in some way God wanted the man to protect the heart of his wife? And, lest I seem to be a bit biased, could it not also indicate that she should be
mindful of the vulnerability of his heart and also be protective of his gift?

And so the first marriage, the bringing together a man and a woman by God was first performed. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” [Gen.2:24, 25] The righteousness of Christ robed the perfect pair. Not only with a covering of light, but of the warmth and security of being in the perfect will of God.

In the freshness and perfection of this lovely home, Adam and Eve thrived in love and harmony. The natural laws of nature were so in sync with the natural laws of the spiritual realm—the Character of God—that perfect harmony enhanced the couple’s ability for perfect trust, love, and loyalty. In this environment there was no need for there to be a “final word or lord ‘. Their mutual respect allowed them to talk over things and agree, without shuffling, on a direction to move forward. They were perfect equals. They were (the man and woman together) the express image of their maker—the image of God!

More than this our first parents were given the privilege of procreating this image, this perfection, for Eternity. No matter how many generations might have followed before sin entered, each would have had perfect DNA. Can you just imagine how beautifully formed and precious each bundle of joy would have been. And what a wonder without the pain of childbirth.

Such harmony and bliss we can only dimly imagine. Yet we are told that ALL of creation was in perfect harmony with every other part of the vast universe. The animals had no fear and Adam and Eve held converse with nature. Now and then we have glimpses of such unique relationships between man and plant or animal. But before, this was “normal”.

Yes, this is the way it was. This is what God still intends for His children. And this is the beautiful reality for which we should strive.

(We know that “nakedness” denotes the intimacy of marriage Because in chapter 3 verse 7 they realized they no longer had the covering of righteousness and were naked in each other’s presence and were ashamed.)

[A fact that will become important later]
Chapter 5

What Happened?

Only where there is freedom of choice can there exist true love. And so it is that the

- Serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said. Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
- And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:
- But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.
- And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely the:
- For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.
- And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” Genesis 3:1-6

For some reason, Eve wandered away from the side of Adam. Undoubtedly, she was feeling quite safe in the garden and while Adam was busily working with the plants and animals, she decided to explore what else was around them. She obviously had a conversation with God regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I am sure that God had instructed them of Lucifer, his fall, and his desire to bring them down with him. The angels, having gone through the painful ordeal of the war in heaven, I am sure also encouraged them to stay together—thinking that there would be more safety in numbers. Yet, here she is alone, in front of the forbidden tree.

No worries! She is wise to Satan’s designs. She has listened intently to the story and certainly if she sees any signs of the arch-deceiver she will have nothing to do with him. Understanding what Eve is expecting, Satan does not reveal his presence. Instead he uses the most beautiful animal in the garden as a medium of communication to Eve—the serpent with wings of burnished gold. This is the first Biblical experience that shouts out to us to watch preconceived ideas—particularly in the realm of the Para physical. What we see is such a small portion of what is really there! This is also the first use of a medium to convey satanic messages. It is also the first illustration of the unity of good and evil—truth and error—to confuse the minds and senses of mankind on planet earth.

Never mind. There she is face to face with the serpent and instead of fear she is experiencing curiosity. “How unusual that he is speaking to her—and with such knowledge” she thinks.

He knows what God has said. Very carefully he couches his words so as to not alarm her yet raise doubt in what God has said. “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden”. By making it seem that God had been unreasonable in restricting them from all the trees, Eve makes haste to correct the serpent with her own overstatement. ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”

With Satan’s ridiculous insinuation, I can almost see Eve drawing herself up to her full stature as a little child might do defending her father, and responding with an air of indignity. Now she is fully engaged in a conversation with the devil. ‘While the serpent is touching the fruit and probably eating it—he says, “Ye shall not surely die.”
Now if he had stopped there, Eve probably would have wondered but also fled. But Satan follows this up with the clincher - - “for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Here he gives the reasoning behind his boldface lie. “God doth know...” Know what? “That in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” This is a true statement. This is what God is trying to keep them from—knowing both good and evil. He wants them to know only good. That is where their safety lies. He never wanted anyone else to know what evil is because it brings pain, separation, and death.

Yes, truer words were never spoken; and never spoken with such an insidious twist as if this was a good thing God was withholding from them. How sad! And even sadder is that Eve swallowed the whole poisonous potion.

Eve felt exhilaration as if she was indeed entering a higher realm. Quickly, with fruit in hand, she hurries to the side of Adam. Immediately Adam sees the awful situation. His heart sinks as he thinks of life without his lovely woman at his side. In a split second he reasons to share her fate with her and he takes the fruit and eats.

At first he imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence. But soon the thought of his sin filled him with terror. Even the air about him seemed to chill the guilty pair. They realize that the cloak of light that had surrounded them was now gone. They could not be naked like this in the presence of God and they sewed fig leaves together to clothe themselves.

Soon they hear a familiar voice calling to them. Panicked they hid themselves in an obscure part of the garden. And the Lord God called to Adam and asked him where he was. Adam replies that he heard God but he was afraid. Why was he afraid? He was afraid because obviously the fig leaves, though lush and green, were a far cry from the robes of glory they had warn before and they felt naked and hid.

Some of the first results of sin are fear and separation. Next come accusation (always a defense mechanism) and a total loss of integrity.

God asks Adam, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat of?”

Adam says, it is the woman you gave me
Eve says, the serpent beguiled me and I did eat

God now speaks to the serpent, which is only the medium of Satan and as such forever a symbol of the evil deceiver:

- And the Lord God said unto the serpent. Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.
- And I the Lord God] will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy [Satan’s] seed and her [the woman’s] seed; it [the woman’s seed] shall bruise thy head, and thou [Satan] shalt bruise his [the seed of the woman’s] heel.

Genesis 3:13-15

What a promise! Life is going to go on because there is going to be offspring. And someone of the line of Eve will bruise the head of the arch-deceiver. Adam looks on with amazed disbelief. But this is nothing compared to the twist in Satan’s plan. Seeing how much God loved Adam and Eve, Satan was counting on God forgiving them, thus clearing the way for
his own reinstatement. Or, if God should destroy them then Satan can triumph that he has 
ruined God’s world and destroyed his children and be vindicated in his own accusation that 
God is a tyrant. But this? How can this be? Forgiveness without reinstatement?

How does that work? And what is the bruised head. Satan watches with terror and 
amazement as the voice goes on.

- Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt 
  bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee,
- And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the 
  tree of which I commanded thee, saying Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in 
  sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;
- Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;
- In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for of it wast thou taken: for 
  dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return Genesis 3:16-19

And to make sure that Adam and Eve understood what the promise meant, he brought two 
of the little lambs and taught them that without the shedding of innocent blood there is no 
remission of sin; and that the lambs represented the seed of the woman that would bruise 
the serpent’s head. Then tenderly he made coats of skin and clothed Adam and Eve (verse 21) 
What a shock it was to see the death of these innocent victims and realize this was the result 
of their sins. What terrible pain was the cost of forgiveness! And yet how wonderful the plan 
that afforded them a second chance.

Eve’s sin:
- Not mindful of where her steps were leading her away from her husband’s side
- Thinking that she would be okay on her own
- Doubting God
- Desiring something that had been forbidden (fruit, more wisdom than what God intended)
- Desiring to be like gods
- Which all led to eating the fruit
- Eve was deceived

Eve’s Correction:
- Sorrow in conception (difficulty in conception)
- Sorrow in child bearing (painful both in birth and choices in life)
- Desire to husband (would need his affirmation)
- Husband to rule over her (PP page 58)

Adam’s sin:
- Valued the woman above God
- Sinned with full knowledge of what he was doing
- Chose to share Eve’s fate

Adam’s Correction:
- Ground cursed for his sake bringing forth thorns and thistles (the need to keep the thorns of 
  life from destroying the good fruit)
- Toil hard for only by the sweat of his face would he be able to eat and provide for his family 
  (work now becomes the qualifier of his existence)
- From the dust he was taken and to the dust he will return.
Chapter 6

Man to Rule...

Let’s look at some of the texts that tell us how man is to rule:

- Ephesians 5:25-33 Reads—Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
- That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.
- That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
- So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.
- For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
- For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
- For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
- This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
- Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself....

Again in Colossians 3:19
- Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

1 Peter 3:7
- Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Here men are encouraged to rule with love, honor; and without bitterness, the wife that is also an heir of the grace of life. The indication is here that if he does not rule in this manner that his prayers will be hindered.

Obviously, in the beginning this is the relationship that Adam had with Eve. It was then natural to have a leadership style like Christ—by example, encouragement, and thoughtful consideration. So what happened? Sin!

The farther we get from that Eden atmosphere, the harder it is to “act” in it. For men, their work is now what defines their worth to themselves and to society. Even though that is the case, he is still called upon to stand in the place of Christ, being the Priest of the home: the husband or “house band” as Christ is head of the church. No matter how busy the man is with his work (and he needs that for himself and his family), he is to show in time and deed the priceless value of his wife and children. This is the first mission field! And no amount of work for others can excuse him from his number one responsibility—to run his household as though in the very presence of Eden before the fall.

Some would say that if the wife were meek and mild as she ought to be that he would perform his duties as he should. Certainly, that would make it easier: but neither one can legitimately use the other one as an excuse for their own failings. Having said that, I must warn you that unfortunately, most every slippage in proper rendering of one’s own responsibilities has an equal and opposite reaction. So if men start taking their families for granted and do not give them the due respect and attention they need and deserve. The probability is very great that disrespect (even if only the lack of respect) will be the result.
[Never mind Gentlemen—I will get to the ladies in due time.]

It would seem that this role of “head of household” is a necessary component in the life of a man for his own emotional health. Others quote scientific studies to support this idea, even submitting that men who are married to a very dominant wife have higher incidences of impotency.

Along this same vein, because of the areas of the brain more developed in a man, he tends to be able to make up his mind more easily than a woman does. As the “final word” in a relationship, this gives him a distinct advantage because when he makes up his mind it is easily “end of subject”. He needs to realize that often that is not the case for his companion! The woman being more likely to think with both sides of her brain, and adding to that her usually more developed emotional component, she can enter into quite an elaborate argument (even with herself) as to the “pros” and “cons” of any given issue—and that quite emotionally! She is much more likely to put more into this detail which often calls forth from the man a bit of an “Okay. No need to get so worked up over it” attitude; which tends to make her feel like he does not understand. (The jury is still out over this one)

Best, gentlemen, to realize what a blessing you have in her abilities to see things from many different perspectives, listen carefully. Put your thoughts in the mix, listen more, then either make up your mind what to do; or, realize that maybe this is an area that she has much more invested in such as the kitchen if she is the primary cook, and defer the final decision to her. Deferring, if your choice, makes you no less of a man and a much better leader.
Chapter 7

Women should submit....


- Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
- For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.
- Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything
- Verse 33: ... and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Colossians 3:18.

- Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it s fit in the Lord.

1 Peter 3:1-6.

- Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;
- While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.
- Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;
- But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Ladies, a meek and quiet spirit is mandatory for success. This does not mean spiritless!! One should be happy (not giddy and silly); not take themselves too seriously (good sense of true humor); but learn to speak up early when something upsets you. You need to teach your spouse that it is safe to discuss things openly and honestly—always giving due respect

Submission is easy when you feel you are being heard and respected. Being heard and respected does not mean that he does things your way. A little compromise* can go a long way towards a peaceful existence. But submission that is not “fit in the Lord” breeds contempt. Especially is this true if a spiritual spin is given to press to conformity. This, ladies, is where we most often make a huge mistake. What is “Fit in the Lord”? Fit in the Lord according to your spouse or in your own heart? Should your spouse be the definer of what is the will of God? Some things can be so clear to someone else but not so clear to you. If you are not violating your own conscience to submit, than for the sake of the one you have pledged your life in marriage to—do it. But if it seems wrong to you, don’t do it no matter what kind of a spiritual spin they may put to it. If this is done in a rebellious spirit, the spirit makes it wrong. When done in a meek and quiet spirit—simply something you cannot do—then you are showing that you answer to a higher power. * [Story about counseling couple and the hangers]

Many disagree with this. They say that if God tells you to honor your parents that no matter how wrong your parents are, you should do what they say because God told you to honor them. Likewise, God says to submit to your husband. So if you are to be obedient to God you must submit. I don’t believe it is being a “feminist” to disagree. We are both heirs of the grace of life and as such both responsible to protect our individual conscience.

Now this is much easier to put on paper than it is to practice. But if you give an inch on this you are likely to not ever draw the line until it is too late. At that point, the result is confusion. Why were you okay with it before and now you are not? Most prefer a course of least resistance. We, ladies are called to higher ground—to show what “noble
independence’ is—not an “independent spirit”. And there is a huge difference. As hard as this may be, it pales to the pain of waking up one day and realizing that much of what is going on wrong in your home is just as much your fault as is the original offender because you allowed it. (Otherwise known as “enabling” or being an accomplice)

For years I fixed our meals at 8:30 a.m. And 2:30 p.m. Being the wife of a Gospel worker, I understood that his work was very important. Occasionally, there would be a true emergency and my husband could not be at the meal on time. Happily, I would heat up the food for him when he arrived (before microwaves) even though it never seemed as good the second time around. Imperceptibly, the occasional grew into the habitual, and just like all the times before, I scurried to make it all hot and nice for him again and again, and again. It was just routine now. He was such a busy Pastor with so many things to do and so many people to visit. I waited on him hand and foot and felt like I was a part of his ministry by doing so. Eagerly I would wait to hear all his wonderful stories when he returned late for meals or at night. This went on for years.

My daughter was nearing her teens when one day we again ate our dinner alone while her daddy’s plate sat empty on the table in his place. After the meal I busied myself with some school project I was working on when I noticed my beautiful daughter quietly put something on her daddy’s plate. She ran off to do something else so I walked by the plate to see what it was. She had written a wrenching poem about her father’s empty plate. It brought tears to my eyes as I realized how seriously this habit was affecting her.

Nearly an hour later, her daddy came home, and as usual I jumped up to heat the meal. He had all these wonderful reasons why he could not be home on time and then he sat down to eat. Of course I did not want him to eat alone so I sat there with him as he talked on and on about what was going on. Now and then my daughter would walk through to see if he had yet seen and read her poem. Finally. I handed it to him He laughed adoringly and thanked her for the cute poem.

Several days went by and the usual was the usual. I had thought that the tearjerker for me might bring about a change in this pattern, but nothing seemed to happen any differently. Finally, I could no longer hold my peace. I explained to him that I also had things to do and that his daughter missed his presence at the table and that from now on, if he was not home at mealtime, he would either have to heat it himself or eat it cold.

Things were good for a few meals and then he started coming later and later. We would wait a few minutes and found that those few minutes were getting longer and longer. Finally I drew the line and we ate alone. Soon he came flying in all out of breath with all the reasons why he was late. I smiled sweetly and said I was so sorry. I made not a move. He sat down and ate the food cold. I was dying inside but could not let on that I was in the slightest way affected. I chatted about this and that and the other. He was strangely quiet and probably half gagging on the cold food. I stayed at the table until he was through and cheerily cleared the table and cleaned up.

Miracle of miracles, he was never late again for years unless it was an honest emergency; in which case I hopped to and heated his meal. So why did I wait so many years? Because the lateness was not a problem at first and the changes were so slow that I did not really take notice. Once I did, it seemed insubordinate to not support his ministry; after all I was just a stay-at-home mom. I never complained but I did not like it and nearly every day mentioned how sorry I was that he was late. But not until I realized what it was doing to the rest of the family was I willing to step up and draw the line. I did not think enough of myself, my time, or my energies to do it for me. I thought that would be selfish.
But ladies, if you do not expect respect you will not get it. I am sure it was not a conscious decision on his part—but the message he was sending loudly and clearly was that his ministry was more important than the family was and that our time was not as valuable as his. Interestingly I do not recall any lessening of the stories and wonderful experiences he was having. His ministry seemed just as successful without my doing double duty, except when clearly reasonable, as before.

This illustration is not necessarily a matter of conscience and represents something quite small in the scheme of things. But observation and experience tells me that such actions only are a small representation of a very much larger problematic attitude—the tip of the iceberg—as it were. All should remember it is the “little foxes that spoil the vine”.

One thing quite clear from the correction given by God to Eve is that the primary role of a wife and mother is nurturing the offspring of love. This is her first duty. How important that she take up this task with genuine pride of job realizing that there really is no higher calling than that which shapes lives, homes, churches, societies and nations. In her hands lies the happiness or lack of happiness of the next generation. It is a glorious work! And lest anyone ask you if you are a working mother, be quick to ask what other kind is there? Studies show that a full time mother does the work of three full time jobs outside the home. Often this fact is lost in our career-oriented society.

Does this mean that a mother should not have a career? No it does not. It does mean that being a mother should be her first job and only when that has properly been cared for should she consider any other career options. Having said that, it is the wise woman that provides for that eventuality before marriage (or at least before children) so that she can move that direction when appropriate or when necessary in the event that she needs to become the breadwinner. Because of the woman’s intuitive and sensitive nature, she is a power both in the home and in the office, profession or career. Make the most of this God given power. Never, never abuse it. You also have a huge capacity for inflicting deep pain by being irresponsible. You choose the legacy.
Chapter 8

A Lesson In Human Nature

I think it is important at this point to look at what happens to the mind of a person who starts
down the path of covetousness. I can think of two stories in the Bible that really help us to
see this process—that of David and Bathsheba, and Balaam and Balak. For our purposes
here, I am choosing to spend time with the latter. We go to Numbers 22-25 I will paraphrase
with occasional mention of actual verses of scripture.

Israel was coming close to the end of her wanderings in the wilderness and was camped in
the plains of Moab “just this side of Jordan by Jericho”. Balak, the king of Moab had heard
of the blessings of God on these people and was afraid that it would not go well with his own
people if he could not somehow get the God greater than his gods to curse Israel. How better
to accomplish this than by a prophet of that God. He knew of just such a prophet named
Balaam.

Balak sent messengers to Balaam with an urgent message saying “Behold there is a people
come out of Egypt and they cover the face of the earth and they have settled down right by
me. Come now I pray thee, curse me this people for they are too mighty for me; peradventure
I shall prevail.”

The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in
their hands and delivered the message of Balak to Balaam. As any person might, Balaam
was cordial and asked them to spend the night so that he could ask the Lord what he should
do so in the morning he would convey the message received.

God came to Balaam and asked him what men these were with him? Balaam explained
their mission and God said “Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people;
for they are blessed.”

In the morning Balaam rose up and told the princess of Balak, “Get you unto your land: for
the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.”

Notice this word “refuseth”. Obviously, Balaam here states his desire to go with them but God
refuses to let him do it. Interesting. I read God’s command as a very straight forward “Don’t
do it”.

Balak was not satisfied and so he sent more gifts and went to Balaam again. Balaam
answered and said, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go
beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you tarry ye
also here this night that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more.” Again we see
Balaam naming his price and toying with the idea that God might change his mind.

“And God came unto Balaam at night and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise
up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

The men did not go after Balaam in the morning. They just figured it was a lost cause and
started back. Balaam, upon waking and realizing what had happened hurriedly saddled his
ass and started out after them.

This made God a bit miffed with Balaam for going and the “angel of the Lord stood in the way
for an adversary against him.”
Balaam is riding along on his ass and his two servants were with him. “The ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sward drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balsam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.’

“But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam’s foot against the wall: and he smote her again.”

“And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam’s anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.”

Numbers 22:28 “And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sward in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.” Balaam is so desirous of the rewards of divination that he has become emotionally instable. So emotionally instable that he is now talking to his ass. What a scene.

And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day: was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.” Here Balaam is answering the reasoning of an ass. Even the presence of his two servants is not enough to bring him to his senses. He’s talking to an animal.

“Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and his sward drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.”

“And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again“

“How much clearer could God be? He said, “don’t go with them.” The second time he says, “If they come for you... ” He goes anyway and his ass saves his life because God found “his way perverse”. And still Balaam can say “IF”. This is bordering insanity. But Balaam wants the rewards.

“And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men” Why did God say to go? Because that is where his heart was. God was trying to save him from terrible embarrassment and shipwreck, but that is what Balaam wanted because he thought in going he would be “fulfilled”. So God said “GO, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes”

When Balak heard that they were coming, he went out to meet them in the city of Moab. Balak chided Balaam for not coming to him the first time. Balaam shrugged and said, well I’m here now. I don’t know if I have any power because I can only speak what God puts in my mouth.
Balak sacrifices a lamb and an ox for food and sends it to Balaam and the princess with him. On the next day, Balak takes Balaam to a high place of Baal where he might see the upmost part of the people. There Balaam does an incredibly sad thing. He directs that seven altars should be built so he can sacrifice seven oxen and seven rams to God. First of all, this is a high place for the worship of Baal. Secondly, Balaam already knows God is displeased with him. How can he lift his face in sacrificial worship? Does he really believe that the sacrifices of oxen and rams can change God’s mind? But audaciously, Balaam goes forward with his terrible plan for the honor of a heathen king.

Balaam instructs Balak to stand by the burnt offerings while he goes a little way to meet with God. And the Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, Return unto Balak. And thus thou shalt speak” So Balaam returns to Balak and speaks blessing over Israel.

Of course Balak is horrified. He sent for him to curse his enemies, not to bless them altogether. Balaam’s defense? I can only say what God tells me to say.

Balak takes him to another spot where he can see Israel and hopes that somehow Balaam can break the spell over himself. Again, seven altars are built and sacrifices made, and again Balak stands by the burnt offerings while Balaam meets with God. This time the message is directly to Balak and it is not good. Balak is getting very worried and takes Balaam to yet another spot. The whole ritual is repeated yet again but this time Balaam, seeing that it pleased God to bless Israel, he no longer went for his divinations but rather looked out over Israel and when he saw the camp of Israel the spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied blessings over Israel.

How incredibly sad! But take note - Balaam was so intent on getting what be wanted that he even tried to use the things of God to get it—he sacrificed animals that were supposed to represent the process of confession of sin and the forgiveness and reconciliation that follows. And he blasphemed God in this way, not once, not twice, but three times. And why seven altars? Obviously he knew enough about God to know that this represented perfection. He is trying to impress God with the perfect gift so he can fill his coffers with dirty blood money.

This was too much for Balak. He smote his hands together and told Balaam to go home. He further told him that he had planned to promote him to honor but his God had kept him from getting recognition. To add insult to injury, God’s spirit came again over him and he went into a vision prophesying curses against Moab.

But something that was part of his second blessing apparently stayed with Balaam and that was that God had found no evil in Israel. We know from extra-biblical sources that Balaam cashed in on that blessing with a plan to seduce Israel to sin. That plan caused the death of 24,000 Israelites. To what depths one will go to get what they want!!

So what does this have to do with Courtship and Marriage? Never is there such a high level of emotions exhibited as in the attraction of “love”. Often everyone else can see it when the persons themselves cannot, why? The emotions are blurring their vision. And make no mistake; it is very common for people who know in their hearts they are not doing the right thing to become even more “spiritual” to somehow appease their own consciences and impress others and God that they are walking down a very noble path.
I once heard the phenomena of “emotional distortion of fact” described this way:

- A child goes through a terribly traumatic situation, such as the abduction of their older sister right out of the bed next to them. They saw it happen but now the fear and pain of the situation nearly blocks it from their memory. That is how the brain deals with horrible situations—it tries to block them from memory. If you fish for information to soon, you will likely either get wrong information or place the child at risk. So you have to help this child get back to “homeostasis” before the child can remember accurately.

- This was likened to throwing a quarter into a pool of water, the deeper it is the more difficult it is to see exactly what it is. The water represents the emotions. One has to quietly drain off the emotions until you can properly identify the object.

- Likewise, the deeper the emotions, the less likely one can see accurately what it is they are dealing with.

Another similar situation involved a young lady walking home from her high school. A car pulled up alongside her going the opposite way. His passenger side window was rolled down and he asked the young lady for directions to the closest mini-mart. She explained the directions and then he asked if she would care to show him. Only then did she realize that he had his trousers open and was masturbating. She held her composure long enough to politely tell him he was perfectly capable of finding it himself, she headed down the road to her home. Suddenly she realized she needed a license number and turned around to get it. But her eyes were swimming so she just tried to get a good look at the car. Then she ran back to the school as it was closer than her home. There she just tried to collect her thoughts.

A couple of her friends came out of class and took one look at her and immediately said, “What happened to you?! They took her home and called the police. Within just a few minutes they found a man that seemed to fit the description.

The police brought him to a place where the young lady could see him, but she could not positively identify him. Why? The high emotions blurred the details

But these illustrations are for trauma not love.

A worker in one of our schools was head of a department where he often needed to do mechanical work on his vehicles. He was married with a family. A new part time secretary was hired who was also married. Neither were particularly attractive but somehow chemistry overwhelmed them. I won’t go into the sordid details, but on more than one occasion she took her Bible with her as she went over to talk to him when he was on the ground under a vehicle. Well what is so strange about that is she repeatedly stood where he could look up her dress and he repeatedly helped himself to that view.

They both divorced their spouses and married...

* * * * * * * * *

How often we see young people or two people of any age, so emotionally involved that they cannot properly identify their own emotions. They cannot see what “reality” is.

1 Samuel 15:22, 23 (Selected)
To obey is better than sacrifice.
For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.
MEN TEND TO MANIPULATE BY:

- Spiritual Intimidation
- Physical Intimidation
- Mental Intimidation
- Fear
- Sex

WOMEN TEND TO MANIPULATE BY:

- Emotions
- Sex
- Manipulating circumstances
- Occasionally – Spiritual Intimidation
- Fear

SPIRITUAL INTIMIDATION

- A most destructive element to marriage
- Generally stops all other communication
- Commonly used before marriage

PERSONAL GROWTH LADDER

- 2 Peter 1:4-8
- Particulars differ for each individual
- Should not judge spiritual commitment from your perspective

Healthy Relationship Graph

- 10% Romance
- 15% Conflict
- 75% Friendship
Chapter 9

Where to Start?

A pastor was approached by a middle-aged woman who indicated that she wished to speak to him privately. In the course of the conversation, she indicated that when her husband and she got into arguments, it would so upset her that she just could not hold her tongue. The pastor listened attentively and sympathetically and offered some “common sense” advice.

“But,” he said, “I realize that it can be very upsetting when you hear him saying such unreasonable things, so I want to give you some medication that you take sublingually much like the heart medication, nitroglycerine.” He gave her a small bottle of clear fluid and explained, “This is very easy to take as it has no smell and not much taste. Take a teaspoon of this each time you feel like you cannot respond appropriately because your blood is beginning to boil and hold it under your tongue until you feel yourself relax.” Happily, the woman thanked him and went her way.

A couple weeks later she returned to his office praising the advice and the medication. They had nearly stopped arguing and were able to discuss things in a rational manner. “It’s wonderful now”, she exclaimed. I wonder though, would you be able to tell me what the medication is so that I don’t run out?”

“Certainly” he responded. “Just refill the bottle with any good potable water.”

So who was the key to the change? Of course, the person who recognizes that a change is needed— that is “I”!

So where do we start? With myself I am the only one I can do anything about. And what a fallacy to think that you can somehow better their lives or their attitudes, or their morals— no matter what they tell you! You can only change yourself. So let’s get started—that is if you choose to be the best person possible.

Who Am I?

Happiness is not something we get from someone else. There must be a deep sense of self-worth, assurance, peace and joy that wells up from within in order to have happiness that is real and lasting. Some of the items mentioned below are to help you evaluate who you are and give you things to think about in the formation of, or reformation of your character and personality. Certain characteristics may remain dominant if they are socially acceptable and reasonable. Others, may need major overhauling.

Love for Learning

A healthy curiosity is such a valuable asset—not for things that are none of your business but for life, health, wealth, and, above all, truth. This requires openness and a teachable spirit. Develop broad interests even in things from the surface don’t interest you. Read a lot on a broad spectrum of subjects. A good newspaper is a good place to start as well as your official church paper. Medical Journals, health reviews, science reviews, nature reviews law reviews, and a good library are really desirable.
Interested and Interesting

A love for learning helps you to be interested in a wide variety of subjects, but now it is time to move this into the social realm. When you meet people, are you interested in who they are and what made them into what they are today? Their journey? Their interests? If you can learn to do this without making it seem that you are nosy, you will have developed a wonderful ability to be interested and interesting as you share “bits and pieces” of what makes up your journey. Notice I said bits and pieces. Be a bit reserved and never try to match story with story or information with information. People who learn this art are fascinating and make wonderful friends.

Learn to be Practical

Learning should never make you impractical or unfit for everyday activities. Instead it should give you an eagerness to get into life and make the most of it. Learning to be practical, particularly if this is not a strength, is vital to your success in life for most people. Only a very few can afford to be absent minded professors or the likes. Most of us need a practical approach in order to accomplish life in a meaningful way.

Being practical in common daily activities means all the things that are the basics of living’ eating, cleaning self and your environment, cloths, sewing washing and basic auto maintenance and transportation. It also means that you learn to manage time wisely.

Education should also reflect reality. Get a good education: one that really prepares you for a life that brings you satisfaction and pays the bills. This does not necessarily mean many years but rather something that gets you prepared quickly and efficiently. Get the basics for service than you have the rest of your life to keep learning and adding other skills to your resume.

One of the most important aspects of learning to be practical is learning to be financially viable and secure. This means taking responsibility for one’s own expenses including savings and insurances. For most, financial reality has not become part of their thinking. But true independence and security are dependent on learning this aspect of practicality well.

Perfectly Happy Alone

This does not mean that you might not think that you would really like to be married, but you honestly don’t need it in order to be happy. You find your life interesting because you have made it interesting. You have interests, hobbies, community services that are meaningful. Complete is a word that comes to mind. Unless this is accomplished, you will find yourself pulling from the marriage instead of contributing to the marriage. This is one time that two halves do not make a whole. It takes two wholes to make a complete and happy union. One cannot give 50% to a relationship and expect it to work. They must give 100%.

Emotionally Secure

This one is a bit trickier. Finding the balance in being secure yet not crossing over to pride takes constant watchfulness. Being widely read and educated helps in being secure in one’s thinking. Learning to be rational, thinking from cause to effect also helps to give security to ones thoughts. But perhaps being at peace with God is the strongest anchor in this area. Also, living one’s life free from embarrassing faux pas
and things that bring guilt allows one to live with one’s head held high

Security is a frame of mind based on peace and real self-worth. It allows one to be challenged without panic or second-guessing. It is settling. Calming-- It gives clarity. It gives one the ability to “Act rather than React.”

Handicaps

These may be congenital, environmental, or accidental. They may include physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual deficiencies. They may cause you to react to life’s situations in a co-dependent manner: or to be high maintenance; or to be weighed down with family issues. It may be problems caused by accident or health issues. Whatever it is, now is the time to identify them and clear out the black widows and clean up the cob webs. Taking a long hard look at your own home style should give you a pretty clear picture as to how healthy you are in these areas. Home relationships are a very good indicator as to how one will be in a marriage, given time. It is also a great indicator of maturity.

Free to Choose

The previous six characteristics must be seriously addressed before one can truly be “free to choose”. At this point in one’s growth, they are not getting in to a relationship because they feel “needy” but because a deep, wonderful friendship has blossomed into a responsible, healthy, and respectful love that can truly be honest as to whether the relationship is best for both of them. This is going into a relationship with minimum baggage and lots and lots of positive energy. A truly healthy person is much more likely to choose another truly healthy person. Now it becomes a win/win situation. One needs this foundation for the inevitable challenges there are to friendships and marriage. Now you come to the table with strength and balance, free of serious besetments. Is this not the way you would want it to be? Now you can contribute wholesome attitudes and habits. Now you are ready to consider a serious relationship.

Common Courtesies

This is another way to say, “Be Thoughtful”. This is the essence of Christianity. Without it, one is only a “form of Godliness” but denying the power thereof. When one is not wrapped up in themselves, they can afford to be thoughtful of others. This adds so much to a relationship.

Don’t Take Yourself too Seriously

A good sense of humor can bring a great deal of joy to life. This does not mean “trying to be funny” but rather able to see the funny side of life. “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

Tight With God and His Word

I put this last, not because it is the least important, but because so many people think that if they are ‘spiritual” that makes up for all their other deficiencies. It can work that way when the person stays humble, teachable, and honest. But one of the best ways to evaluate one’s spiritual commitment is what it does for you as a person. Does it really change you and make you whole. If it does not, it is not real —period. Not that it does that over night but there should be very definite improvements in all aspects of my life.
This can only happen if you allow God to be the Master of your thoughts, the captain of your ship, and the guard of your heart. Then He will never let you down. He will be to you a Firm Anchor on the stormy seas of life: A solid rock as the cornerstone of your building: The cleansing and refreshing stream to your thirsty soul. Yes. He will be EVERYTHING!
# Relationship Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Special Friends</th>
<th>Courtship</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Be selective</td>
<td>Minimum of 2 years</td>
<td>Short--4-9 months</td>
<td>Pray together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be circumspect</td>
<td>Group Activities</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Serious discussion regarding intimacy around 3 months before wedding</td>
<td>Play together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be yourself</td>
<td>Variety of life experiences</td>
<td>Practical/realistic</td>
<td>Decide what is right timing for children and how many is appropriate for your circumstances</td>
<td>Work together</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Activities</td>
<td>Don’t play with hearts!!</td>
<td>Chemistry (under wraps)</td>
<td>Realistic expectations</td>
<td>Towards common goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>What would you want someone else doing with the one you marry?</td>
<td>Variety of life experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work on being who you want to be</td>
<td>Keep a single eye!!</td>
<td>Secure in Friendship</td>
<td>Even more attentions than it took to win</td>
<td>Know physical limitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deal with “handicaps”</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Communicate</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Picture” of what you want in a spouse</td>
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<td>Handling Finances?</td>
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<td>Where is God in this relationship</td>
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<td>Remember: What you win them with is what you win them to.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safeguards for future relationships</td>
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<td>Keep a single eye!!</td>
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<td>Authentic</td>
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**Premarital Testing**

If positive results start counseling

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**DO NOT ANNOUNCE ENGAGEMENT UNTIL THIS IS SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED**

Children:
- Affirmation
- Discipline
- Fences
- Special time for each one
- Love learning
- Start before birth
Chapter 10

Relationship Time Line

The Time line Chart is an attempt to bring together research, Inspiration. Common sense and experience to a single page of counsel. This is not intended to include everything and yet be as comprehensive as the medium permits.

FRIENDS

Many Friends makes one’s life rich. Learn how to be friendly, thoughtful, and caring, without divulging your inner most private thoughts. This is especially important until you have given much time to “proving” the friendship. Be friendly but also be a friend. If circumstances provide, have many friends of both sexes and learn how to graciously refrain from pairing off regardless how much you think you “love” the person that is showing you preferential treatment—and of course show no preferential treatment to any one person of the opposite gender. There will be those friends of the same gender that you hold most in common with that you will naturally tend to spend more time. This is natural and healthy. But never show unkindness to anyone else, even if they are really obnoxious. People who are unkind or obnoxious to anyone have personal issues and this includes teasing or making fun of others either in or out of their presence. Keep your friends age appropriate.

Be Circumspect

Careful (not given to careless behavior); Thoughtful (considerate of the feelings of others and mindful of the way your behavior might impact their lives presently and in the future): No familiarity (familiarity breeds contempt. Cheapens relationships.)

Be Yourself

Whether in the home, at school, at work, or casual activity, your demeanor should be consistent. If it is not, take a good look as to why. Everyone in your life deserves your best behavior - even your enemies.

Group Activities

If not available, foster group activities. Learn to get along with groups and yet not be led by group behavior. This fosters a pliable spirit without becoming a “door mat”. A good team player, leader, and sport.

“Who Am I” Work Time

If you have not already, this is the perfect time to really work on being who you want to be. Give thoughtful consideration to the kind of person you want to be and then “visualize” just how that person would act in any given situation. Then go forward as that person. Keep a prayer in your heart and a song on your lips and you will be surprised how easy it is as long as you keep your mind focused on the changes you want to make—or more accurately the “vision” of that dream. Hopefully it means “beholding” Christ in me. He is the greatest model I can put before you!
Deal With Handicaps

Before you get yourself into any “serious’ relationships, it is really important to deal with whatever handicaps you may have identified as well as those that might arise out of the maturing process. This process may hurt deeply but it is much better than finding out too late that you have attached yourself to someone trying to fill a void in your life or a need in theirs.

“Picture” of What You Want in a Spouse

List the most important characteristics you want—the real “deal makers”. Then list what you would like. It is also important to list the absolute “deal breakers” such as “always right”, sloppy, age, culture, spirituality, etc. Use this as a guide—not necessarily an absolute. Generally, we tend to itemize a bit more narrowly than reality might dictate. Keep it to things that really matter to you.

Observation

Before someone thinks you are observing is the best time to see what the person is really like. Use this time wisely! And make clear mental notes so that if the person starts “shining” around you, there is already an unemotional assessment in place. Never be too quick to pick up on such attentions. Wise is the young person that takes note but does not immediately “fall’.

Safeguards

Before you get into a “relationship”, it is really important to choose fair, honest, spiritual counselors that can and will give you guidance for the most important decision of your life. Ideally this should include parents, a spiritual leader that knows you well, and a trusted friend. Make a contract with yourself that you will not proceed without the blessing of all of these. It is not possible to marry into a family and not get the family with it. Family is family! Is and always will be. So if you cannot comfortably be joined to them—be part of them—don’t do it.
SPECIAL FRIENDS

Out of your wonderful “team” of friends, someone will eventually surface as a possible candidate for a more serious relationship. Unfortunately this often happens too soon and you have not really learned to be friends. But if you have been careful and given proper time, there will be someone that just starts to “fit”. If you are of appropriate age to be getting more serious and you are in a position of education or career choices that wisely lends itself to a more single relationship, then it is appropriate to give - in small ways - evidences that there is a level of interest. At this time, if mutual, you would be in your rights to pair off within the group as long as your conduct is not uncomfortable for the group.

Be Selective
Don’t just go with the flow or with whoever shows an interest. Make sure it is someone you have a possible interest in—not because of his or her looks but because of their character. Hopefully you are secure enough to be strong in actually making a choice.

Group Activities
It is hard to get too personal or too close in group activities—so stay in groups until you have given enough time to really evaluate if this person is truly of interest to you and you are ready to commit to a courtship (This may not be as practical for older couples but they can still stay in somewhat populated places)

Variety of Life Experiences
Often times we really do not observe our “choice” in broad enough true to life situations. This is a very common mistake and gives a very narrow view of the true character of the person of interest. Consciously find ways to observe as many aspects of every day activities—including work styles and ethics—as is reasonable. And really try to be unimpassioned with your evaluations.

Don’t Play With Hearts
This is someone’s life you are engaging. Make sure you are wisely measured in how you express your feelings for this person. Stay away from the expressions of love until it is really appropriate as in courtship. There are many ways to let someone know how much you care about him or her without going into highly emotional rhetoric.

How Far
One thing that would be best set in stone is your “values” when it comes to physical expressions of love. You do not know, even if engaged, that this is the one you are going to marry. So ask yourself; “what would I want my “spouse” doing with someone else right now? I should go no farther with the one I am with than what I would be completely comfortable with thinking about my “future spouse” with someone else. This thought should set the standard for all physical expressions through courtship and engagement. Physical expressions of love are simply out of place in the “special friends” era.
COURTSHIP

Minimum of Two Years
Unless you have known each other for a long time in another capacity, it is really important that the courtship be long enough for a true picture of what “the rest of your life” might look like barring unexpected trauma. At least 6 months of this time needs to be in close proximity—better a year.

Time Management
How you use your time during courtship is a very good indicator of the health of the relationship. Is it reasonable and rational—balanced? Are you still being responsible with your education/job and whatever else has been your commitment? Are you being careful with your health or are you cutting corners? Remember this time sets the standard for the marriage so make it real.

Practical/Realistic
This follows time management. I just mention it as a reminder of how important it is to the success of the relationship.

Chemistry
Physical attraction is very important—extremely important. This should be the person you long to hold, cherish, touch and caress. But that longing must be kept under wraps—properly controlled until it is appropriate. Unless the friendship is really strong and the ability to tackle challenges well established, physical chemistry can really blur the senses and cheapen the relationship. In fact, when chemistry has the ascendancy it rarely makes room for anything else of substance. That does not mean that you deny the longings as long as it does not denigrate to thoughts of lustful sex; but you must keep it in proper perspective. It also does not seem appropriate that your physical desire drives you to “satisfying your own lust alone”. That seems a bit like carnal sexual release rather than God-ordained love. Sex was created to be the crowning element in marital intimacy and when kept with that precious package, it is a feeling that transcends nearly all other feelings as it includes every aspect of the human soul. This level of intimacy is God’s ideal for His children and carries with it great blessings.

Variety of Life Experiences
Again make sure that your experiences together include as many of the experiences of life available to you. Talk about some of the other experiences that you may not be experiencing such as “what might be the real response to loss of limb or paralysis”.

Secure in Friendship
Is this friendship a place where you feel the most comfort—the most peace?
Is this “home”?

Honest
Absolute honesty is the substance of trust. The first appearance of dishonesty marks the beginning of the end of trust. Complete trust is the foundation of true friendship. Guard your honesty and your ability to be honest with each other. Being honest should never be confused with being brash or rude. True honesty can be most thoughtful and careful with each other’s feelings and will be.
Finances
Make sure that you learn to live within your means and know how to save substantially. It has been said that “The high cost of living is really the cost of living high.” Be thrifty and practice living gracefully on a budget. Being crafty in a positive way can go a long way to making your life happy and comfortable.

Where is God?
Where is God in your relationship? Better yet, Where is God in your life? Is it for real or for the relationship? Do you really know where you stand with God? Are you secure in this knowledge? Do you really know what YOU believe? Or is it what someone else believes? Are you sure God loves you? These are questions you need to be certain of the answers. Your relationship with God needs to be the strongest bond you have. Never, never, put it off for a more convenient season.

Keep a Single Eye
This relationship needs to succeed or fail on its own merits. Don’t be looking elsewhere until you have really decided it is not going to work and properly ended it. And I hope you won’t flaunt another relationship too soon after you ended the last one. That would be a bit tacky!

Authentic
Be real’ At all times! This means a love of truth and absolute humility! A real listener - someone who weighs everything and then acts. Authenticity is a beautiful quality.

Reading and Talking
Be careful not to read things or talk about things that bring you closer than you should be at the stage of relationship you are at. This includes things about setting up home keeping or matters of romance and sexuality. This should be common sense but somehow we like to gravitate to such subjects.

What You Win Them With Is What You Win Them To,
So faithfully deliver what you advertise.
PRE-MARITAL TESTING

It is important to do your testing before going farther with your plans. And above all, do it before you announce your engagement. If problems show up, it is really difficult to make wise choices when everyone knows you are planning to get married. If you decide to continue with your plans then start your pre-marital counseling.

ENGAGEMENT

Short

It is best that you keep the engagement time quite short: four to nine months at the most. When you know you are getting married, it is much more difficult to maintain purity. But remember you are not married until you are legally married. (Even so in Biblical times)

Blood Work and Physical Exams

Do this before announcements are made and invitations sent. This way, if there are problems you have a quiet chance to work it out and decide how to proceed without pressure.

Serious Discussions Regarding Intimacy

Three to four months before the wedding, there needs to be a serious discussion regarding birth control method—or possibly whether or not you are going to use birth control. If either of you have previous relationships, don’t expect the other one has equal experience. But also, experience does not necessarily mean a right understanding and proper eligibility for true intimacy. There are many who have had lots of experience with sex and sexuality but who have no idea of love and intimacy. Discuss this carefully and thoughtfully but be aware of the possible enticement in such a discussion. If the decision is for oral contraceptive, at least two cycles are necessary for protection.

Realistic Expectations (a stressful time of planning)

During this time there might be considerable stress with planning and all the things that often need to be done before the wedding. Be realistic with your expectations of each other and make sure that your plans are not more grandiose than your time and budget allow. Frustration is the result of frustrated expectations. So keep your expectations realistic so that you can more easily manage your feelings.

WEDDING

The wedding should be a wonderfully memorable experience. Make sure that both of you really have your reasonable dreams fulfilled. If your dreams are expensive, then save money before hand so that you start your life together debt free. This is really important.
MARRIAGE

Pray Together
Though the husband is the “Priest” of the family it is always best that you take time to both pray together. This is not the time to sermonize to the other but to honestly pray for each other for strength, wisdom, and blessings. Remember the things that are important to the other. Even more importantly pray for your self and what you need to be able to carry your responsibilities with dignity.

Play Together
You must find things that you love to do together—fun things. Play together. Make sure it is really fun for both. If it is a game, don’t feel like you must prove yourself and win. Down time together is really important. And when /if there are children, all the better.

Work Together
Working together does not necessarily mean on the same job. It may, but more than that, it means toward common goals. Without common goals, your lives will go different directions. That does not mean that each of you might have your own projects that you also spend time with, but “common goals” often are the one thing that can give you a reason to overlook some other little irritations. This is one of the reasons why you should be old enough to really know what you want so you can share these goals with you.

Encourage Each Other
Always be affirmative with each other. Hope and encouragement can go along way to keeping the friendship strong and real. Negative talking usually escalates the problems. Learn the difference between someone discussing his or her feelings or fears and negativity. Discussing feelings requires unimpassioned listening and response. Never denigrate. Try to understand but do not “fix it”. Encourage and affirm your love and understanding.

More Attentions
Did you do nice things for each other before you were married? Then marriage should afford you the opportunity to do even more. Little thoughtful favors lets the other one know that they are always on your mind, even if the actual time together is minimal. A caution: Little favors do not take the place of respect and friendship. Such favors have the appearance of an attempt to salve the conscience or buy absolution.

Respect Physical Limitations
One or the other may have or develop physical limitations. Regardless of the dreams of either, the responsibility now is to readjust to accommodate the weakened one. Find out if it is medical (including emotional) or environmental, including home, work, or other stressors. Sometimes the adjustment might be quite minimal. Other times it calls for major changes.

Communication
The Bible exhorts us to not let the sun go down on our wrath If problems
arise, don’t leave it for another day. Take care of it just as soon as possible. There may be times that the passions are too high to deal with it the same day but do not let it become old and cold. Remember, often the ‘innocent’ one needs to speak up first—not as the “righteous one” but with a humble spirit. Communication is so important, always keep the avenues open. Care enough to notice but never nag or pressure. Just be there and make it clear you have the time and the desire to be “present and accounted for”, in other words, truly interested and concerned.

CHILDREN

Affirmation
Children need to be appreciated. They thrive on affirmation. Even when they make mistakes you can correct them best by appealing to their better characteristics. Never denigrate regardless of how disgusting their behavior.

Discipline
This does not mean punishment—it means firm guidance. Certainly, behaviors that are not appropriate must be corrected in the wisest way possible. This may mean appropriate denial of certain benefits; but make certain that it is not done in frustration or anger. There must be consequences. These need to be commence rate with the infraction.

Fences
Age appropriate boundaries make children secure. To be sure the smarter the child the more likely they are to push those boundaries. There are exceptions to that rule but the smarter ones usually need more to keep them challenged—and much more guidance in directing their energies.

Consistency
Nothing is more important to the success of parenting than consistency. Any exceptions awaken in the child boldness to try it again until all restraints are gone. Whenever you want to make an exception, it needs to be identified as such and be prepared to explain your reason for taking that privilege.

Special Time For Each
Each child has their own needs and talents. One-on-one time is important to each child and there should be equality. Also, identify at least one strength or talent that you can encourage them to pursue.

Love For Learning
Hopefully, you are a person of broad interests and love to learn. This makes it much easier to encourage this in your children from birth. Talk to them so they learn early on what real words should sound like and explain their environment.
**Start Before Birth**
Even what you eat and your attitude at the time of conception affects the health and character of the baby. Keep yourself healthy and positive and the environment happy and stress free.

**Spiritual Guidance**
“Train up a child” is the counsel. The most important element in training is modeling. Take special care to prepare your worships to relate to the needs of your children. Vary these special moments. How you relate to your personal experience with God is molding how your children will view Him. These should be some of the happiest memories that your children can carry with them through their challenges, bringing ‘to their hearts a warmth that radiates from their lives, influencing the very atmosphere about them.

May your home be a bit of heaven on earth.