

Preparing for Marriage 3 of 8

The Narrow Way Brings Joy

#0052

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—January 3, 1970

Our opening text this evening is Psalm 16:11. Will you read it with me?

“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” Psalm 16:11.

Does Jesus want us to be happy? Where is the happiness, does this say? In the path, in His presence.

“Thou wilt show me the path of...”

What?

“...life...” Psalm 16:11.

Yes. This is the path of life. And it will be shown to all who seek God for it.

Now turn to *Adventist Home*, page 99. We have a statement there that we’d like to read next:

“The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward” *Adventist Home*, page 99.

Think of it, dear friend:

“Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward. Jesus wants to see happy marriages, happy firesides” *Ibid*.

Now turn to Matthew 7:13–14. We just read from the Psalms that God wants to show us what path? The path of what? The path of life. That’s right. In His presence is fullness of joy. Now, in spite of the fact that God wants us to have this happiness, this joy, this good life, notice what the statistics are on those who find it. Will you read with me Matthew 7:13–14?

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” Matthew 7:13–14.

This beautiful path of life, are there very many people in it? Not very many. Now, you remember in our first lesson we read from Volume 4, page 504, that there are how many happy marriages? Less than one in a hundred, less than one percent. Think of it, friends, not one marriage in a hundred results happily, and that’s inspired by the One who knows, who keeps the vital statistics accurately.

So if you want—don’t miss this point—a happy home for yourself, if you’re unmarried, looking toward marriage, if you want a happy home for your children, you’re seeking to train them for successful homebuilding later, remember, in either case, if you’re going with the majority and carrying on the program that the great majority of the human family is carrying on, you will not be what? You won’t be successful. You won’t find what? You won’t find happiness. What does Jesus say you won’t find? Life, the path of life. The path of life has few in it.

I stress this in class after class because the principles we’re studying are exactly opposite to what’s going on today. And I’m not just referring to what’s going on in the nightclubs and the dives. I’m referring to what goes on in conventional life among decent people. They simply do not know how to carry on courtship and marriage. They don’t know how.

I’ll tell you why they don’t know. They don’t listen to the One who does know. They copy after what they see going on around them. And what is going on is failure. If it weren’t for the exciting romance that’s connected with all of this, nobody would pay much attention to it. But just as in many other areas of life, the great enemy has put some exciting, make-believe atmosphere into the thing, so that people are beguiled, entranced, bewitched, infatuated, and they’re led that downward road, which sooner or later in this life, and in most cases, in the future life, means failure, loss, death.

Oh friends, I’m so glad to see so many people that want to learn God’s way. Is that what you want? You know, if you want to do it the way the world does, there are all kinds of books and courses and marriage counselors and all the rest that can tell you exactly how to do it the way the world is doing it. But in this little class, we are studying the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

“Ah,” but somebody says, “Isn’t that narrow?”

Yes. We just read it’s narrow. Isn’t that what we read here?

“...strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life” Matthew 7:14.

I'd rather walk a narrow way and get the joy and happiness and success. Wouldn't you? It takes the narrow road to get there. God is showing us the path of life.

Now, in our review of our first two lessons, we noted that foundational in a successful Christian home is the training and experience of those who make the home. And this training and experience come during infancy, childhood, and adolescence, and it takes all of it to prepare for successful home-making. So as soon as a child is born (or in a sense, even before it's born, but we'll take from the moment of birth), from the moment of birth the child is being trained, either to be a successful husband or wife, or an *unsuccessful* husband or wife. This is what is happening from the first day of life on through.

"Ah," but somebody says, "My, nobody has a perfect home."

No. That's true. Nobody has a perfect home. At least you and I are not involved in them, are we? Does that mean we'd just as well throw up our hands and drift along with the crowd? Not so.

May I challenge you with this thought, friends: The less advantageous your environment, the more you need to do something about it yourself. In other words, the poorer parents you have, the less you have learned in infancy and childhood, the more you need to get busy *now*, if you're a teenager or in your 20s, and do something about it to make up for lost time. Do you see? This is vital to build the foundation.

And you parents who think, as you face these things, "Oh, my! My children are already four years old, six years old, nine years old, twelve years old, fifteen years old, and look how much time I've lost!"

Well, let's not cry over spilled milk. It isn't all spilled milk; some of it's spilled apples. You can pick up spilled apples. So let's get busy and do all that we can to redeem the time. What do you say?

The lessons, while they're great and fundamental, are very simple. As we've already reviewed, they are love and self-control. Love—the power to go; self-control—the power to stop. And as I told you, those are really two sides of the same coin. Love, with power to go, is one side; love, with power to stop, the other. Don't we need that in eating, friends? It's too bad to try to eat without any appetite, but it's too bad to have appetite take over and not be able to what? Stop.

It's a wonderful thing to have affections, to have love. But my friends, the world today is full of people who are thinking that to love means to just love anything and anybody you feel like loving. Obey that impulse is the motto, and they're following it out. Does that mean happiness? No. It means problems of all kinds: physical, mental, and spiritual.

Don't miss this: True affection is revealed just as much in saying "No" to the wrong person, as it is in saying "Yes" to the right person. And what commandment

of the Decalogue did we find this expressed in? The Seventh Commandment. Repeat it with me:

“Thou shalt not commit adultery” Exodus 20:14.

And this is both for single and married. As I sometimes put it, if you cannot keep your hands off 1,000 people of the opposite sex, how in the world are you going to keep your hands off 999 people when you are finally married? That’s what’s involved in it.

When people marry, they’ve chosen each other before God, to forsake all others. But the years of adolescence are the training field in which young people manifest and develop a self-control in which they learn to keep their hands off the opposite sex, to keep their hearts and minds steady and clear on their goal, to keep themselves pure for the one that will eventually be their companion.

This is old-fashioned, as old fashioned as Abraham and Isaac, Enoch and Methuselah, as old fashioned as the Garden of Eden, as old fashioned as the Bible. And we make no apology for being old-fashioned, friends. Oh, we thank God for the old paths wherein is the good way. And we rejoice that in this generation, as in all others, there is a remnant both of children, young people, and parents, who love what God loves, and who hate the godless ways of the rebellious. God bless us as we study these principles!

What I want to study with you tonight is just an introduction to the steps that lead from the foundation established in the parental home on to marriage. You will note on our blackboard here that we have this broad foundation which we studied last week. And that is faithfulness, where? In the parental home. And included with that, as we’ve seen, is love and what? Self-control. [Elder Frazee writes on the blackboard.]

I would like to have you think of love as manifested in the home in three particular ways: First, in obedience. Is that one of the first lessons a child has to learn? Yes. And remember, if you’re 21 and haven’t learned it, you need to go to the cradle roll. That’s right. I don’t mean in that room in the Sabbath school. I mean, you need to learn that lesson which somehow was skipped in your infancy.

Jesus says:

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments” John 14:15.

Love is manifested then, in obedience. Now, I’ll just put an “O” there.

Love is manifested, second, in service. And what do I mean is the difference between obedience and service? Obedience is doing what you are told to do. Service is doing what you see needs to be done, whether you are commanded to do it or not. Isn’t it a wonderful thing when children in the home are quick to see that daddy needs his slippers or that mother needs the dishes washed, and just spring into action? Isn’t that a wonderful thing? Yes. They’re manifesting what? Love. And you see, in that, they may not know it, they may not be thinking about it at all,

but they are developing the traits which will make them successful husbands or successful wives.

Someone gave me, several years ago, a very interesting cartoon picture from the front of the *Saturday Evening Post*. In it, the artist, the cartoonist, had drawn a bride and groom standing before the bishop getting married. And as they stood there, the artist had put in each corner the dream of the bridegroom, and the dream of the bride. The bridegroom was having breakfast in bed, his wife had brought him a lovely tray, and a lovely breakfast, and even the morning newspaper on it. But over in the other corner, in this artist's picture, in the bride's dream, she was having breakfast in bed, and her husband was bringing her a lovely tray with a bouquet on it.

We smile at the absurdity of it, but you know, my dear friends, millions of people who get married are thinking of something in that vein. They are thinking in terms of what will this bring *me*? What will this do for *me*? In the home that I've grown up, maybe I haven't found all the happiness. I haven't found everybody waiting on me hand and foot, 24 hours a day. Or if I have, I'm probably not happy. In any event, if I married for anything less than love, I'm in for trouble. And love is not selfishness, is it? Love and selfishness are as far apart as the poles, and farther.

And so, we come back to this foundational experience of love, expressed in obedience and in service.

Third, as the child grows, it is expressed in responsibility, in bearing responsibility. It's quite a responsibility to set up a home, so much to think of. Just think of the practical aspects, the business aspects, financial, and on and on and on.

Where is the young person to learn those lessons of bearing responsibility? In the home. Isn't it too bad for a young woman to get married who has never cooked at all, or if she has, has made some cookies? Or a pie, perhaps? It really takes something more than cookies and pie to keep things going week in and week out. Doesn't it? Yes.

And happy is the husband that has a wife who has learned from her mother, or in some other way that God has arranged to fill the vacancy, to carry the responsibility of a home in keeping it running smoothly, day after day after day, week after week after week, month in and month out. Because isn't that what it takes to make a successful home? And what is that memory gem you learned? It is by faithfulness to duty where? In the parental home, that the youth are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. This is it. So, love, in the parental home, manifested in obedience, service, and responsibility.

I gave you three areas of self-control last week, and I want to get them before us here. The first has to do with the appetites: the physical appetites, the things we like to eat and drink. The second has to do with the affections: the people we love. And the third has to do with the passions: the physical desires that God has reserved for the marriage relation. To have full control of those three basic urges is vital to successful homebuilding.

How many young people today enter the marriage relation with control in those three areas? You know there are very few, and this is why there are so few happy homes.

“...strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth...”

To where?

“...life, and few there be that find it” Matthew 7:14.

So, I say to children and young people, you have some homework to do: To develop a love which is manifested in obedience, happy obedience; service, happy service; responsibility, happy bearing of responsibility; to develop a self-control which means that you don't eat between meals, that you eat only those foods which you know are good for you, that you chew your food thoroughly and slowly, that you eat at the proper times, that you've learned to say, “No,” no matter who tempts you to break over and indulge in that which is harmful to health. Oh, what a wonderful lesson!

And then the affections: To be able to take that love, dear children and young people, which God has put in your hearts, and focus it upon the ones He's told you to love—your father and mother, brothers and sisters, and other members of the family—and to refrain from throwing your love around to others that you have no business to love, no right to love. *This* is self-control in the area of the affections.

And I'll tell you this little secret, a very important secret: if you have full control of the appetites and full control of the affections, you'll be successful in dealing with the passions. This is the answer. Back of every failure in the area of the passions, back of every impure action is a failure to control either the appetites or the affections or both. Samson is one of the examples of failures in this line. Joseph and Isaac are glorious examples of success. Here we have some young people who have had these years of training and experience in developing this broad foundation built upon the Rock.

We read the other night a very interesting expression about every step toward a marriage alliance should be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest purpose. I'd like to call your attention to seven of these steps. As you study this subject, you may want to make more or less a number of these steps, but for the purpose of this class, I give you seven steps.

I'm going to begin on the blackboard tonight with the last step, which of course, is marriage itself—the wedding day. This is the culmination of the goal. The step before that, obviously, is the step of engagement. Now, what are the steps before this? Well, the step before engagement is the step of courtship.

Do you know what's one of the biggest problems in life today? The problem is that these four steps that I'm going to point out here are skipped. And instead, we slide through an arrangement called dating. We slide over those steps. But I must remind you of a law of physics: we do not slide upward. A slide goes in what

direction? Downward. And so, really, people that are on this slide are not going *up* these steps; they're going down. They *fall* in love.

Even worldly authorities that have studied this whole question of courtship and marriage as it's carried on in America today, are free to point out that the dating program is far from satisfactory.

Let me give you Heaven's evaluation of it. Turn, please, to *Messages to Young People*, page 450. You see, friends, as I told you in an earlier class, it won't do to just take a few soybeans and sprinkle them in a ham stew and say, "Well, I guess we've improved things." We're going to have to just make a *clean* sweep of the world's way of dealing with this subject. And that's why I seek to be very plain and frank in pointing out that Heaven's way is an entirely different direction.

"Courtship, as carried on in this age, is a scheme of deception and hypocrisy, with which the enemy of souls has far more to do than the Lord" *Messages to Young People*, page 450.

So it's a scheme of what? Deception and hypocrisy. You know, that word hypocrisy is an interesting word. The word "hypocrite" comes from the word that the Greeks use to describe an actor on the stage. That's what a hypocrite is in Greek. He's an actor on the stage. That's what we have in much of the courtship and the dating that precedes it. It's acting.

Children and young people learn their lines from Hollywood actors and actresses. They see them on the movie screen. They see them on the TV screen. And so they endeavor to ape what they see. We shall need to forget all about the way lovemaking is carried on by Hollywood and TV. The less we know about it, the better we'll be able to carry on Heaven's way. The Devil is not interested in teaching us God's way.

So, I'm going to erase this [dating]. I'd like to suggest to your mind this evening, several fundamental steps that ought to be considered *before* courtship is entered into. The first one is: Is it time? [Elder Frazee writes on a blackboard.]

Is that a good thing to ask before eating a meal? Oh, yes. And it's a good thing to ask before we enter into courtship. One of the last statements I gave you in the last class was from *Volume 2*, which points out that this is a fast age and that girls and boys commence paying attention to each other too early.

Ripe fruit takes time to develop. There are those who would pick the blossoms of the peach or apple tree because they are pretty. But when you pick the blossoms, you will miss the fruit. Right? And the boys and girls in junior high, who pair off and have their little love matches, may be picking the flowers but they'll miss the fruit. You cannot have both.

But, when I say, "Is it time?" I'm talking about more than chronological age. I'm talking about something very definite, my friend. In your own experience, is it time for *you*?

In another class, I want to bring you some statements from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, showing clearly that while marriage is God's plan for many, it is not His plan for all. John the Baptist was not married. The work that God had called him to do was of a nature that his particular assignment from God was in the single state. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, recommended the single state highly. He indicated that he himself was single. But he recognized that various people had various callings.

My point is this: If this is true, and it is, then the young man who is thinking about marriage, the first thing for him to find out is this: does God want me to be married, and is *this* the time? Unless he knows that, all this dating business is out of place.

It would be like a man who is going window shopping, going around looking at automobiles, and we say to him, "You're going to buy a car, are you?"

"Well, no, I hardly think I will at this time."

"Well, what are you doing, then?"

"Well, I just like to look around."

This is the way the young people of the world have their fun. But as I showed you in our last study, the relationship between men and women is not for fun; it's for the holy sacrament of marriage. And young people who spend their teens in fun between the sexes are hardly prepared for successful homebuilding.

So, first: Is it time? In other words, am I at the place in my experience where I need a companion? Am I at the place where it is God's time for me to seek a mate?

And number 2: Am I ready? This involves all that we've studied here. It involves a checking up to see.

Number 3: Who? Who is to be my companion? Who? And notice, this is not number 1. It's not number 2. Long before my mind begins to go out to Mary or Alice or Jenny or Barbara, as a young man, I'm to be intent on mastering these lessons in the parental home, of love and self-control, and if I feel that the time has come for me to seek a companion, my next question will be what? Am I ready?

All right, I bring a principle now, which is most important in all this climbing the steps. Will you turn, please, to your book *Adventist Home*, page 70? What is the second word of this chapter heading? Counsel.

I would like to assign to you for study in connection with the class lesson tonight, this chapter, chapter 10 in *Adventist Home*, a very important chapter, "*When Counsel is Needed*." You will find as you study these lessons that counsel is needed in all seven of these steps. All seven of them.

What is counsel? Well, first let me tell you what counsel is *not*. Counsel is not running around the neighborhood or the church until I find somebody that'll tell me what I want. That's not real counsel. If that's what you're going to do, my dear young friend, save the time and do as you please to start with. And don't be a hypocrite and pretend to get advice, when all you're seeking is something that agrees with your ideas.

Sometimes when I've been in administrative work, a student would come to me, perhaps about a leave or some other matter, and say they wanted to talk this over with me. And I would say to them, "Now, do you want advice or do you want permission? Which is it you want: advice or permission?"

I've said to them, "I'll tell you frankly, I would give people, sometimes, permission to do things that I wouldn't advise them to do at all."

There are very few people who really want advice. But if a child, a young person, has been properly taught in the parental home, and has learned these lessons of love and self-control, he will desire advice and will respect it.

Now let us notice with whom we should counsel. The first paragraph on page 70. What is the first source from which we are to seek counsel as that page outlines it? From whom? From God. It's called here what? Divine counsel. So I'm going to write this down over here: Counsel with God first.

How is God going to give us counsel? Here I am, a young man. My mind has been impressed that I ought to consider the question of marriage. First I'm going to consider: is it time? Do I need a wife? Second, I'm going to consider: am I ready? Provided I get a favorable answer on number 1. And third, I'm going to be thinking of whom? But now, first of all, I am going to counsel with whom? With God.

How is God going to answer me? By sending an angel to knock at my door? By some audible voice? Probably not. God is going to give me counsel, friends, through the instructions that He has given in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy. If I search these pages, He will impress my mind with that which is appropriate to my case.

With this is prayer. Prayer and study go together. Notice on page 71:

"If men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray four times a day when such a step is anticipated" *Adventist Home*, page 71.

How many times a day does it recommend that we pray when we're thinking of this question of courtship and marriage? Four times a day, if we've been praying twice a day before this. Study that expression. It indicates the tremendous importance of this subject.

Counseling with God. And remember, this counseling with God runs all the way from the first step clear through. Counseling with God, every day; making this a

matter of prayer, every day making it a matter of study—prayer and study together, on our knees before God; waiting before God to know His will; asking for the impressions of His Spirit and the guidance of His providence.

Now, let us go to page 73, and see who else we're to counsel with. The middle of the page, the last three lines of the first paragraph that begins on that page:

"Take God and..."

Who else into your counsel?

"...your God-fearing parents into your counsel"
Ibid., page 73.

God-fearing parents; counsel with God and with God-fearing parents. Why does it say, God-fearing parents? Well, not all parents are God-fearing. And while, of course, it's a proper thing for a young person to respect his parents, regardless of whether they fear God or not, there are certain angles of these subjects that unless a person fears God and knows Him, he won't be able to give good counsel on.

All right, now, let's see what else we have in the way of counsel. Page 72:

"When so much misery results from marriage, why will not the youth be wise? Why will they continue to feel that they do not need the counsel of older and more experienced persons?" *Ibid.*, page 72.

Are there others, besides parents, that God may use to bless us with counsel and advice? Yes. So, we'll put number 3 with God-appointed advisors.

If you study this chapter carefully, you'll find all three of these areas of counsel mentioned more than once. These comprise the channels that we should seek: Counsel with God, first of all, counsel with God-fearing parents, and counsel with older and more experienced persons, particularly those that God has appointed to give advice.

Let me say this to you, dear young people: A person's ability to give counsel in these matters depends upon two things. One is how well he knows the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy; the second is experience, and that comes with the years. Neither one of these, alone, is sufficient; to merely look to people who are gray-haired, shall I say, who don't know the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, will not give us very good counsel. But on the other hand, no matter how much young people may know the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, the kind of counsel we need as young people comes from those who have spent many years in the service of Christ, in dealing with the practical problems of life.

Well, I see our time is up. We'll pick up here tomorrow night, and study more about these seven steps. Shall we stand?

Dear Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing. And as we are traveling this road of life, help us not to be dismayed because there are so few traveling this way. Help us to look to Jesus, who has opened this path through the sacrifice of the cross. And may we be glad to share with Him the good way, and inspire others to walk with us in the path of Thy commandments, for Jesus' sake, amen.

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