

# Preparing for Marriage 5 of 8

## *Important Questions*

#0054

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—January 10, 1970

Proverbs 11:14:

“Where no counsel is, the people fall...” Proverbs 11:14.

And I might add, fall in love. Where there's no what? Counsel. If we want to walk the upward way of successful marriage, we walk the way of counsel. In fact, in *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 501, not dealing particularly with marriage, but it lays down a general principle. I'd like to read it to you:

“Meekness and lowliness of heart will lead men to desire counsel at every step” *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 501.

If we don't desire counsel at every step, what is it that we lack? Meekness and lowliness of heart. Now, we've labeled these first four steps on the blackboard “counsel,” but there needs to be counsel all the way up. At every step, literally, as this says. We've labeled this first four “counsel” because these are pre-courtship steps of counsel. They are generally overlooked, generally ignored.

“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” Proverbs 11:14.

This last part of the verse is often quoted “in the multitude of counselors there is safety,” but do you know what that means to many people? It means running around the country until finally, we find somebody that agrees with what we want to do. Really folks, if the purpose of counsel is to keep us from danger, what we'll be looking for is a counselor that can point out danger, rather than one that can just rubberstamp an okay on our plans. Do you see what I mean?

And the reason we need a multitude is this: the first one may not see the danger, and the second one may not, but the third or fourth one might. And we should not be impatient about the person who advises caution, care, delay, more time to pray, more time to study.

Now Proverbs 15:22: Without counsel what happens does this say? Proverbs 15:22. What happens without counsel? Let's read it together please:

“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established” Proverbs 15:22.

Oh, how many people have wonderful plans, especially in this matter of courtship and marriage, but without counsel, their purposes will likely be what? That's what it says. They'll be disappointed.

"...but in the multitude of counselors they are established"  
Proverbs 15:22.

Really, if I'm meek and lowly of heart, the best friend that I have will be the man that helps me to wait and not get into something that would be a disappointment. Is that right?

Proverbs 20:18:

"Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war" Proverbs 20:18.

If even to make war, good advice is needed, certainly, infinitely more important is making love, because this involves a decision that's for life.

"Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war" Proverbs 20:18.

Remember, it has to be good advice to be good. And we've studied what some of the prerequisites for counseling are—an experience with God, knowing what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy say on the subjects to be counseled over, and then an experience in life that enables one to give good counsel.

Turn to Proverbs 20:5. Here is a very important text:

"Counsel in the heart of man is like..."

What?

"...deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out" Proverbs 20:5.

Here I come with my bucket. I want to get some water. The water we're dealing with here is what? Counsel. That's right. If I want it, what have I got to do? Draw it out. Any of you ever get water out of a well with a bucket? Let me see your hands. Oh, yes. You have to let the bucket down and then do what? Draw it up. Draw it up.

Some of the poorest advice you can get, my dear young friends, is that which comes with very little effort. There are people that can *glibly* tell you what to do and not to do. Usually, it isn't worth very much. The best counsel that you'll get will be something you will have to go after and draw out. Draw it out.

"Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" Proverbs 20:5.

Now, this evening I want to study especially with you this second step: Am I prepared?

You say, "Well, you studied steps three and four last time. Why are you going back to step two tonight?"

I've had to study with you a number of things in order that we will appreciate the importance of number two. We'll understand each step better if we see how it fits into the total series of steps.

Let me make very plain, dear friends, that this is a skeleton outline and represents an ideal experience. I'm not here to say that anybody that doesn't take every one of these steps in exactly this order is doing a wicked thing or even the wrong thing. That isn't the point. In this class, we are studying the ideal. Many people seem to be perfectly satisfied, or at least reconciled to settling for far less than the ideal. But my business is to present to you the ideal. I hope that in your heart you want the ideal. The more you want the ideal, the more you will appreciate these studies.

But the reason that I mention this point is this: Be very careful how you judge or condemn somebody else who doesn't quite follow this or does something different. You'll have to leave that with them and God.

You know, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, the Lord put them on an ideal program, and He gave them what to eat? Manna. And after they'd had that a while, they became quite dissatisfied, and what did they want? They wanted some flesh. Did God give them some? Yes. Did He give them some swine's flesh? No. Did He give them some oysters? No. What did He give them? Quail. And that is what the Bible calls what kind of meat? Clean meat. Yes. Was it better than the fleshpots of Egypt? Yes. Was it as good as the manna? No. But who gave it to them? God did. Why? They wanted it so bad.

And I can tell you this, my dear friends, what I'm studying with you in these classes is not swine's flesh. It's not even quail. It's manna. And there are millions that are going for the fleshpots of Egypt. And there are multitudes who cry for the quail. And God even lets them have it sometimes, but sometimes we find young people whose hearts go out for God's highest ideals. It is to satisfy *that* longing that these classes are given.

So, if you want manna, we're getting it straight from Heaven, through the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. But remember, if somebody else does it a different way, don't condemn them, don't judge them; maybe the Lord let them have some quail.

On this matter of "Am I prepared?", I want to look at seven points tonight, on what it means to be prepared for marriage. Prepared for courtship, should I say, for the two are, of course, linked in the matter of preparation?

Properly speaking, a young person is not ready for courtship unless he is prepared for marriage. This thing of running association of young men and women all through the teen years and early 20s, finally reaching a marriage, is supposed to

bring a broad acquaintance. It's supposed to make young people qualified to make a wise choice. In many, many cases, it results in a premature marriage—in some cases, long before the years when people are ready.

These seven points that I'm going to give you tonight on what it means to be ready, I'm giving to you so that if you are unmarried, you can use these points to help evaluate yourself; if you are married, you will need these points to help guide your children or others who from time to time may look to you for counsel. And as we shall see, these points are just good common sense. Everything in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy is good common sense, isn't it? And if we don't see it, it's just because we lack that common sense. But I think you'll see the reasonableness of every one of these points.

The first two deal with the physical. Turn to *Messages to Young People*, page 452. It has to do with age. What is the proper age?

“Attachments formed in childhood have often resulted in very wretched unions, or in disgraceful separations. Early connections, if formed without the consent of parents, have seldom proved happy. The young affections should be restrained until the period arrives when sufficient age and experience will make it honorable and safe to unfetter them. Those who will not be restrained will be in danger of dragging out an unhappy existence. A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness of a person as young as himself to be his companion for life” *Messages to Young People*, page 452.

Now, whenever we read a statement like this, there is the probability that someone in the class will think of some experience where some young people did make their choices during the teens, and it turned out all right.

I want to say this to you, dear friends: whatever your age, if you're married, don't take the reference I have just read, and use it to make you unhappy or dissatisfied with your present situation. We've already studied the point that we're to make the best of the marriage we have. Is that right?

But now we're studying tonight what counsel to give young people. I think I told you of an experience that I had just a few weeks ago, a long way from here. A couple of young people came to me in a place where I was holding meetings and said they wanted me to give them some advice. They were going to get married in a few weeks.

I said, “Do you want me to be real frank with you?”

“Yes.”

I said, “How old are you?”

They told me. They were both in their teens.

Well, I said, “You are not old enough.”

And I referred them to some statements they could read in the Spirit of Prophecy. Like most human beings, they began to reason with me, but I told them that as a minister of Jesus Christ, I had no authority to set aside the clear statements of the Word of God. And I pointed out that even worldly authorities show that the statistics are stacked against successful marriage based on teenage choices. This isn’t to say that they never work out. We’re dealing, remember, with the ideal, the best counsel. And this says:

“A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness of a person as young as himself to be his companion for life” *Ibid*.

Now, when we go through all these seven prerequisites, you will see that it isn’t just a matter of the calendar, it isn’t just a matter of how many years a person has lived. A person needs several years to develop all this preparation. That’s why it’s poor judgment to rush in ahead.

Authorities who have studied these things from a physical and mental standpoint, tell us that the average young man is not out of adolescence until 21 to 24 years of age; the average young woman is not out of adolescence until 20 to 23 years of age. The girl matures a bit earlier than the man.

You notice that there is a play of several years there. And this is in general. There’re exceptions in both directions. Some people are never mature enough to be married. Did you know that? That’s right.

In *Ministry of Healing*, page 358, we’re given another statement dealing with the matter of age:

“Early marriages are not to be encouraged. A relation so important as marriage and so far-reaching in its results should not be entered upon hastily, without sufficient preparation, and before the mental and physical powers are well developed...

“...in most cases there should not be a great disparity in age” *Ministry of Healing*, page 358.

What does disparity mean? A difference. But you notice it says, “in most cases.”

I think of dear Elder Haskell, one of the great pioneers of this message. If you’ve read his life story, as was written by Sister Ella M. Robinson—the granddaughter of Sister White—in the providence of God, he had a wife, his first wife, who was a number of years older than he was. And she was a wonderful help to him in his work. Later, after a long sickness, she died. And his second marriage

was with a woman quite a bit younger than he was, and she also was a wonderful help to him in his work. But remember, in general, in most cases, there should not be a great disparity in age.

Under physical, we note not only this point number one of the age, but we note the matter of health. This statement in *Ministry of Healing* says:

“The parties may not have worldly wealth, but they should have the far greater blessing of health” *Ibid*.

This is a part of the preparation, and if a person is looking toward marriage, that’s one of the things they ought to check. It isn’t a good thing to inflict upon a loving companion the care of an invalid. That statement that I just read from *Ministry of Healing*, page 358, you will also find in *Messages to Young People*, page 438.

How many points have we had on “Am I prepared?” Two. What’s the first? Age. And the second is? Health.

Now, 3 and 4 are going to deal with the mental side of things. Number 3 is: schooling completed. Schooling completed. I used to write that down in my notes: education completed. But as I was studying it today, I was impressed anew with the fact that our education is never completed. But there is a part of our life which is spent in the schoolroom. And this is not the time, ideally, for either marriage or courtship.

I know that this is very unpopular, like most of what I’m giving in this class, but again, we’ll read it out of the books. *Volume 5*, pages 109–110. This was written to a young man whose mind was filled up with thoughts of courtship and marriage, and who was planning to go to our college in Battle Creek. Sister White, writing by inspiration, says to him:

“Should you, my brother, go to our college now, as you have planned, I fear for your course there. Your expressed determination to have a lady’s company wherever you should go shows me that you are far from being in a position to be benefited by going to Battle Creek. The infatuation which is upon you is more satanic than divine. I do not wish to have you disappointed in regard to Battle Creek. The rules are strict there. No courting is allowed. The school would be worth nothing to students were they to become entangled in love affairs as you have been. Our college would soon be demoralized. Parents do not send their children to our college or to our offices to commence a lovesick, sentimental life, but to be educated in the sciences or to learn the printer’s trade. Were the rules so lax that the youth were allowed to become bewildered and infatuated with the society of the opposite sex as you have been for some months past, the object of their going to Battle Creek would be lost. If you cannot put this entirely out of

your mind and go there with the spirit of a learner and with a purpose to arouse yourself to the most earnest, humble, sincere efforts, praying that you may have a close connection with God, it would be better for you to remain at home” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, page 109.

And then on the next page, continuing the same testimony to the same young man:

“Some of those who attend the college do not properly improve their time. Full of the buoyancy of youth, they spurn the restraint that is brought to bear upon them. Especially do they rebel against the rules that will not allow young gentlemen to pay their attentions to young ladies. Full well is known the evil of such a course in this degenerate age... The infatuation on the part of both young men and women in thus placing the affections upon each other during school days shows a lack of good judgment” *Ibid.*, Volume 5, page 110.

I dare not alter that inspired instruction. You wouldn’t want me to, would you?

Dear friends, I repeat, it’s just good common sense. You know, getting training in a school, if it’s the right kind of school, calls for all that a person has. Doesn’t it, to get the benefit of it? This matter of courtship, picking out a life companion is no small thing. It calls for a great deal of thought and time and counsel and prayer. The attempt to mix the two, in almost every case, means that one or the other or both suffer. God’s instruction is clear and reasonable.

There is another reason why the ages we have noted in the preliminary points, and this matter of schooling being completed are important. And that is: In order to select a life companion, the judgment needs to be mature. And in order for the judgment to be mature, in most cases, that means reaching the age we have already read about, and in most cases, it means having the schooling completed.

Let’s turn to *Messages to Young People*, page 442, and we’ll read a statement on this:

“The good of society, as well as the highest interest of the students, demands that they shall not attempt to select a life partner while their own character is yet undeveloped, their judgment immature, and while they are at the same time deprived of parental care and guidance” *Messages to Young People*, page 442.

Most students, in most schools, their judgment is not mature yet, and they are at the same time deprived of this parental care and guidance. Now, why would the judgment need to be mature before a person goes on up these steps? Why, my dear friend, good judgment is necessary in order to make a good selection, isn’t it?

Yes. And if there is any important decision in life, it is the selection of a life companion.

Then there is another angle to this thing. When a person's judgment is mature, he is prepared to select, not only a life companion, but a life work. How important it is for young people who choose each other as life companions, to know what they're going into, as far as life work is concerned. This is so important.

Let's review now. What's our first point of being ready? Age. Second point? Health. Third point? Schooling completed. And the fourth? The judgment matures. All right.

Number 5 and these next two points have to do with the practical. Number 5: experience in practical life.

Pick up your *Adventist Home* book now, and turn to page 87. I'd like to assign this chapter to you for special study. This is one of the most important chapters in the whole book, in my judgment. Notice the first sentence on page 87. Will you read it with me?

"Upon no account should the marriage relation be entered upon until the parties have a knowledge of the duties of a practical domestic life" *Adventist Home*, page 87.

What do those first three words mean, "upon no account"? Never. As a doctor friend of mine used to say, "That isn't very often, is it?" So, before the marriage relation is entered upon, the parties should have what? A knowledge of the duties of a practical domestic life. What does that word "domestic" mean, as used here? A home life. That's right.

What do those words "the parties" mean? The husband and wife. Do you mean the husband and wife *both* need experience, a knowledge of practical life?

My wife was telling me about something that she had read about a young woman who was married to a young minister. She was telling this herself, reminiscing: Soon after they were married, she was getting dinner ready, and she decided to bring home some carrots from the store. She thought, "We'll have some carrots." And she asked her husband, "Do you like creamed carrots?"

"Yes." He liked creamed carrots.

So she went to work while he was away. She had learned somewhere along the line, in a domestic science class, I think, to make white sauce. So she decided she'd have some white sauce. She made the white sauce and then she chopped up the carrots and put them in the white sauce—raw, of course—and proceeded to cook them.

But pretty soon everything stuck and was burnt and it all had to go in the garbage can. They had tomato sandwiches for dinner. As I say, the one who was writing this book told it on herself.



Now, as I said in my last class, it takes more than learning how to bake a pie or make a few cookies to make a successful home. Doesn't it? Yes. It takes the bearing of responsibility in preparing meals in a home day after day after day.

"Well," somebody says, "can't I get this in my own home after I get married?" Well, that's the way a lot of people do it these days. But it's not recommended. What we're studying is the Lord's instructions:

"Upon no account should the marriage relation be entered upon until the parties have a knowledge of the duties of a practical domestic life" *Ibid.*

Read on down through this page and through the rest of this chapter. Notice the various things that are essential: the care of children, practical home nursing, cooking, sewing. And then for the young man, notice over on pages 92 and 93. The prospective husband, it says, should be thrifty and industrious.

Does a young man who is seeking a wife need to be already experienced in practical work? Why, of course. What right does he have to ask some girl to share his immaturity and inexperience in dealing with the problems of practical life?

Closely connected to this fifth point is the sixth point, which is capital or its equivalent. That means money, property, or its equivalent.

"Well," somebody says, "not very many people would get married today if they had to have that." I'm afraid that's true. But notice here on page 92:

"In early times custom required the bridegroom..." *Ibid.*, page 92.

Who is that? The prospective husband.

"...before the ratification of a marriage engagement, to pay a sum of money or its equivalent in other property, according to his circumstances, to the father of his wife" *Ibid.*

This, in the proper circles, wasn't to buy the wife. That wasn't the point. It was to establish his credit, the bridegroom's credit. That was what it was for.

"This was regarded as..."

What does this say?

"...a safeguard to the marriage relation" *Ibid.*

Now notice this next sentence:

“Fathers did not think it safe to trust the happiness of their daughters to men who had not made provision for the support of a family” *Ibid.*

This, of course, brings us right back to what we were studying last week, that the parents should have something to say before the young man ever wins the affections of the young woman. And this shows that in the patriarchal times, the father, acting as the protector of his daughter, required of the suitor some evidence, tangible evidence, that he could support a family.

“No man is excusable for being without financial ability. Of many a man it may be said, He is kind, amiable, generous, a good man, a Christian; but he is not qualified to manage his own business. As far as the outlay of means is concerned, he is a mere child. He has not been brought up by his parents to understand and to practice the principles of self-support” *Ibid.*, page 93.

You see, it comes back to the home. In the parental home, the young man should have advanced in obedient service in bearing responsibility until he can help support in the parental home. Did Jesus do that? Did David do it? Did Moses do it? Yes. And so with Elisha and most of the people that we see successful in the Bible, we see examples of this.

So, a young man who is contemplating marriage should first ask himself, along with all these other points, “Have I demonstrated that I can support myself?” Or is dad still picking up the gasoline bills and my board bill and my clothes bill and my schooling bill and all the rest? If I have not demonstrated that I’m fully able to pay my bills and keep out of debt and get a little ahead, how do I dare take on the responsibilities of a wife?”

“Ah,” but somebody says, “Two can live cheaper than one.”

Don’t fool yourself. And don’t forget what we’ve just read here. If a young man were coming to me and asking advice on this question of marriage and whether he was ready, one of the questions I would put to him is “Have you learned to keep out of debt? Or is your idea of getting married buying a house for nothing down or at least just a little bit and so much a month? Is your idea of getting married going and buying a car for a little down and so much a month? Is your idea of getting married going out and stocking the house with furniture at a little down and so much a month?”

“Ah,” but somebody says, “Brother Frazee, you’re out of touch with the times. That’s the way everybody lives today.”

No, I’m not out of touch with the times. I’m very much aware that most people live that way. But my dear friends, it’s a rat race. It’s not for me or anybody that I can counsel. Keep out of that. Brother Martin was telling me about a sign he saw down here near Gallup, New Mexico, on the highway. Some store said, “The best terms on earth: Total down and nothing a month, the rest of your life.”

Dear young people, until you have learned to keep out of debt, work on that a while because you'll need it. Somebody may say to me, "But Brother Frazee, in what's called self-supporting work, how in the world is a young man going to get ahead?"

Well, dear friends, I want to tell you, instead of self-supporting work being an *alibi* for going in debt or not getting out of debt, if there is any line of work that people should learn to be good managers, *keen* financiers, this is it, this is it. If there's any line of work, you'll need it in this one. And if you don't know how to do it in self-supporting work, get a hold of somebody who has made a success in self-supporting work in doing what we're studying about tonight, and perhaps you can take some special work in becoming a master of that science.

Now, number 7 is the spiritual qualification. Turn again to *Messages to Young People*, page 442. We read this statement a while ago, but the other time was on the matter of mature judgment. This time it's on the spiritual:

"The good of society, as well as the highest interest of the students, demands that they shall not attempt to select a life partner while their own character is yet undeveloped, their judgment immature, and while they are at the same time deprived of parental care and guidance" *Messages to Young People*, page 442.

The character is to be what? Developed. It doesn't say perfect. But at least, dear friends, the creature ought to be out of the cocoon, so you can tell what it's going to be. That's right. The character is to be developed. The *set* of characters are to show. And this takes time.

Let me read you a statement on this from *Volume 5*, pages 617–618. Will you turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 5:22? This is one of the most important points in counseling with people, to help them find whether they are ready and whether the one they are contemplating is ready. This is speaking to Timothy with respect to ordaining elders and deacons in churches, but the principle applies to what we're studying:

"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" 1 Timothy 5:22.

In commenting on this, the messenger to the remnant gives this instruction:

"The gospel net gathers both good and bad. It takes time for character to be developed; there must be time to learn what men really are" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, page 618.

Every now and then I hear of experiences where a young man is baptized one day and married the next day. He's been going with an Adventist girl. But in this case, she insists that she cannot marry a non-Adventist. So he's put in the water

one day and married the next day. I will not say that God does not, in His mercy, overrule in some of these things. No, no.

Remember this: King Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, and God, in His mercy, converted the young woman. But King Solomon, instead of being thankful for the mercy of God in converting this woman when he married out of the truth, turned around and tried the same plan with hundreds of other heathen princesses. And you know what they did? They turned his heart away from God.

The fact that occasionally doing what God has told us *not* to do doesn't lead us to destruction all at once, should never lead us to counsel other people to follow our example, should it, friends? No.

The man with whom I trained in the ministry told me of an experience he had with a young woman, a member of the church where he was holding meetings. She brought with her a young man to the meetings, and they decided they were going to be married. Elder Tindall pled with her and said, "Wait a year." But no, she insisted. He was baptized. They were married, and within just a few weeks, he turned his back on the church and went right ahead with his worldly ways.

It doesn't always work that way. But I want to tell you something, friends: never marry a person to reform them. Young women, don't marry a young man hoping to change him into a saint; the same for young men with young women.

It takes *time* for character to be developed. *Know* that your own character is set in the direction of Heaven, and know, by observation and by the counsel of your own advisors, and the advisors of the other party, that the one with whom you think to engage in courtship is somebody who can be depended upon to help you in the heavenward road.

Heavenly Father, rightly interpret to our hearts the things we've studied from the inspired pages tonight. As we think of this wonderful responsibility of marriage, help us, who counsel others, to hew to the line and lift up the standard. And may every young person here tonight set his sights that nothing less than the ideal shall be his choice. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

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