

Preparing for Marriage 6 of 8

Pleasing Him

#0055

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

I want to tell you what great inspiration I get from looking into your faces, young and old, children and parents, and young people, all anxious to find out what best pleases the Lord. That's the happy way to live, dear folks.

2 Timothy 2:4:

“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” 2 Timothy 2:4.

Who's chosen us to be His soldiers? Jesus. And our business is to do what? To please Him. Isn't that something to live for? Just to please the Master.

Turn over now to Romans the 15th chapter. We'll see this same thought emphasized. The One who has chosen us to be His soldiers has set us the example. Romans 15:3, what does it say about Jesus?

“For even Christ pleased not Himself...” Romans 15:3.

Who did He please? His father, all His life? Yes. From the first dawn of intelligence, as He first began to know, as a little child in this world, the Father in Heaven, all the way through—12 years old, in His teens, in His 20s, in His 30s, always pleasing His Father.

And so the 1st verse of Romans 15 says:

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not...”

What?

“...to please ourselves” Romans 15:1.

There is no subject in which we betray, reveal, what our motive is, more than in this question of courtship and marriage. If we're seeking to please ourselves, it will certainly show up. If we're seeking to please the Lord, it'll show up. And in this class, we are seeking to find out *how* to please our Lord.

In Ephesians, the fifth chapter and the 10th verse, as translated in the Twentieth Century translation, we read this. You might like to copy it down:

“Always be trying to find out what best pleases the Lord”
Ephesians 5:10 (*Twentieth Century Translation*).

Over 45 years ago, when I was a student at Loma Linda, we had a little testimony study band, and this was our motto. I recommend it to you. I’d like to have you memorize this verse. “Always be finding out what best pleases the Lord.”

Isn’t that a beautiful thought? Just think, *every* day when you wake up in the morning, the first thought: “Oh dear Lord, what can I do to make You happy today? You’ve done so much for me, what can I do to please You?” And whether it’s about diet or dress, music or reading, association, courtship, marriage, amusement, recreation, the way we spend our time, the way we spend our money, lifework, education, everything, always be trying to find out what best pleases the Lord.

Are there some things that don’t please Him at all? Are there some things that please Him better than others? Always be finding out what *best* pleases the Lord.

You know, some people, when they come to God, are always trying to find the bargain counter. And in most of the cities I’ve been in, the bargain counter is in the basement. Oh, we want to climb the *heights*, don’t we? We want to find out what *best* pleases the Lord. We’re not looking for a bargain. We’re not trying to find out the lowest level on which to live and still keep out of hell. We’re trying to find out what? What *best* pleases the Lord. All right.

Now, turn in your *Adventist Home* to page 43, and we’ll see a wonderful paragraph here on this subject as it applies to this matter of courtship and marriage. The last paragraph on page 43. This is a wonderful chapter. It’s called “The Great Decision.” I want you to read this chapter; it’s only a short one. And I want you to read it, along with the one I asked you to read last night, sometime between now and our class next Saturday night.

“Marriage is something that will influence and affect your life both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will not advance his plans in this direction without the knowledge that God approves his course” *The Adventist Home*, page 43.

Then a sincere Christian won’t take *one* of these steps. And he won’t keep taking one after the other unless he has what? The knowledge that God approves his course.

What does knowledge mean? Something you *what*? Know. Something you *wish*? Something you *guess*? Something you *hope*? It’s something you *what*? *Know*. And a sincere Christian won’t advance his plans in this direction without the knowledge that God approves his course.

Tell me, if inspiration tells us this, *is* it possible for a sincere Christian to know whether or not God approves his course in these matters? It must be, or else these wouldn’t be written. God doesn’t mock us.

Did you ever see somebody take something that a dog wanted, and hold it up above the dog and let the dog jump for it? But did you ever see somebody keep holding it up out of reach so that the dog could never get it? Now, God doesn't do that. That's why I gave you that picture. God doesn't do that. He doesn't tease us; He doesn't mock us. He's in the business of helping us to know.

Notice this next sentence and I wish you would read it with me. You all have it there in your book. All together:

"He will not want to choose for himself, but will feel that God must choose for him" *Ibid.*

Oh, I was looking at this again today, and I thought, "Isn't that wonderful that a young person can be so fully wrapped in with God, that he doesn't even *want* to choose for himself?" Isn't that wonderful?

"He will not want to choose for himself, but will feel that God must choose for him" *Ibid.*

Now comes the sentence that links this with those verses we read from the Bible. All together, read the next sentence:

"We are not to please ourselves, for Christ pleased not Himself" *Ibid.*

Then, is the great business in marriage to find the person that will please *me*? Is that the great business? Why, no. The great business is to find what? What will please the *Master*.

And incidentally, friends, that's the best way, in fact, that's the only accurate way to find the one that'll please *me*. Did you know that? That's what we call a paradox. The reason that's so, there are two reasons: First, I don't know what will please me. And especially, I don't know what'll please me ten years from now. There's nobody in the world that knows what'll please them ten years from now, or five years from now.

The other fact is that God does. God has made *me* in a certain way, and if He intends for me to be married, He's made a companion—just as He made Eve for Adam. And that person will be the one. The one that will please *Him* the best will be the one that, in the end, will please *me* the best. But I may not know that to start with.

Now, those last two sentences, will you read them with me again:

"He will not want to choose for himself, but will feel that God must choose for him. We are not to please ourselves, for Christ pleased not Himself. I would not be understood to mean that anyone is to marry one whom he does not love. This would be sin" *Ibid.*

It would be sin to do what? Marry somebody you didn't love. You see, part of the marriage vow is that you promise to do what? To love. Well, if you don't love them, you're not going to marry them.

But I'll tell you this, dear friends, some of you may smile when I say this, but I want to be sure that I get it in somewhere in this class. If God is leading two people together and they go at it in a proper, dignified, matter-of-fact way, conscientiously to find out the will of God, when the time comes for love, the Lord will take care of that all right. There won't be any problem with that at all.

But notice these last two sentences:

“...to marry one whom he does not love. This would be sin. But fancy and the emotional nature must not be allowed to [Do what?] lead on to ruin. God requires the whole heart, the supreme affections” *Ibid.*

This brings me to a very important point in this whole matter. You've heard of people getting the cart before the horse, haven't you? Yes. In worldly courtship and marriage, the thing that leads is impulse, emotion, feeling. In God's plan, these things follow. The time in God's plan for love, and the expression of love, is when the matters of practical judgment and counsel have all been settled.

But in the world, the way it's carried on, two people meet each other, and either at once or later on as they keep running around together, they do what they call “falling in love.” And even if they counsel during that experience, they are so involved in their emotions that it's very difficult for them to get much benefit from it. And in many cases, they don't do any counseling. They're sure that they have the one and only, that “Why ask when you already know the answers?” Do you see what I mean? And really, in most cases, it's a waste of time. Because as this says:

“Fancy and the emotional nature lead...” *Ibid.*

But in most cases, they lead on to what does this say? To ruin. Can even a Christian have an experience like this? Can even a Christian be deceived? The Bible says the heart is what? “Deceitful above all things,” Jeremiah 17:9.

I want you to turn now to your *Messages to Young People*, and I want you to see that being a Christian does not, in itself, keep people from making mistakes in this matter:

“The underhand way in which courtships and marriages are carried on is the cause of a great amount of misery, the full extent of which is known only to God. On this rock thousands have made shipwreck of their souls. Professed Christians, whose lives are marked with integrity, and who seem sensible upon every other subject, make fearful mistakes here” *Messages to Young People*, pages 447–448.

Now notice this. A person may seem sensible on every other subject, but if he allows his emotions to get the better of him, he may make what? Fearful mistakes on *this* point of courtship and marriage. So, if there's *any* subject in the world that we need counsel on, it's this one.

And now, looking back at our page 43 of *Adventist Home*, the key to all of this is this wonderful statement that the sincere Christian will not want to do what? To choose for himself. What will he feel? God must what? Choose for him. We're not to please ourselves, for Christ pleased not Himself.

I'd just like to go over some of these points tonight up here [Elder Frazee is referring to the blackboard that he's written on.], and show how in *every* one we're to be thinking, first of all, of pleasing whom? Pleasing God.

Take this first one: counsel. Is God calling me to marriage? That very question indicates that my first question coming up these steps is what? What do I want? I want to please God. I want to please God.

I'm going to read you a little sentence from a booklet called *Special Testimonies*, Series B, Number 16. This is page 16 of this little book. Elder Burden got out this little compilation of testimonies in the early days of Loma Linda. This is written especially for young people who are receiving training for Christian work:

"I repeat, do not enter into a marriage engagement, unless there are good and sufficient reasons for this step,—unless the work of God can be better advanced thereby" *Selections from the Testimonies for Students and Workers of our Sanitariums*, page 16.

Now, this is a very high ideal. It doesn't rule out marriage. It doesn't say that. But it does say that Christian young people who sense the shortness of time, the nearness of the end, and who are devoted to the service of Christ, their first desire will be not to get married, but to do what? Get the work done. And so, the dedicated young person, whose heart is filled with one thing—to please His Lord—if God leads him to see that getting married will increase his usefulness for God, fine. He'll get married. But until then, what's his one heart's desire? To get the work done. I'll read this again:

"I repeat, do not enter into a marriage engagement, unless there are good and sufficient reasons for this step,—unless the work of God can be better advanced thereby" *Ibid.*

There are some marriages that do advance the work of God. There are others that have just the opposite effect. So on number one, our first thought is, "Dear Lord, what will please You?"

We come to that second one that we studied last night. Am I prepared? Who knows best whether or not I am prepared or not? God. Now, I'll counsel with God.

I'll counsel with God-fearing parents. I'll counsel with the advisors that God arranges. But in all those things, instead of a restless, fidgety, impatient thing—"Well, are you going to let me go? Are you going to let me go?" No. I am saying, "Dear Lord, there's only one thing I want." And that's what? "To please You." That's what I want.

Now, number 3 and number 4. I'm going to put them together. Counsel with the young man's advisors, counsel with the young woman's advisors. If I'm a young man and I'm counseling with my parents about who, and finally with the parents or guardians or protectors or advisors of this young woman, if I have gotten hold of what we're studying tonight, what *is* it that I am trying to find out? What will please my Lord.

Has He told me to do this counseling? But this isn't just some red tape to be gone through, and impatiently I go through it hoping that nobody will get in my way. Oh, no. I'm just anxious to get all the help I can, that would stop me from taking, not just a bad course, but anything less than God's best will. Do you see? And so, not impatiently, but calmly, I can counsel with this one and that one, each one, and I won't say, "Oh my, I wonder if I'll ever get through this thing and get to doing what I want?"

I can tell you honestly, God may let me have some disappointments and delays along the line. He may let people that He is using, put roadblocks in my way. But if my sincere desire is to please God, will I get upset about that? Why, no. I can say, "All right, Lord, if You're letting somebody be a roadblock in my way, if You want me to move, You can move the roadblock. And if You don't want it moved, Lord, I don't either, and praise the name of the Lord for anything that stops me."

Turn in your *Adventist Home* to page 75, and I want you to read one of the most amazing statements in the book. This is taken from *Volume 5*, and it's a personal testimony to the same young man to whom this testimony was written, that I was reading from last night. In what we read last night, the Lord's messenger was dealing with the question of this young man's relationship to the rules of the college. But in this statement she's dealing with this same young man's relationship to his parents:

"Should parents, you ask, select a companion without regard to the mind or feelings of son or daughter?"
Adventist Home, page 75

This was his question. "Why," this young man says, "do you think a father or mother ought to pick out a companion for *me*, without regard to my mind or feelings?" Now notice how the prophet answers it:

"I put the question to you as it should be: Should a son or daughter select a companion without first consulting the parents?" *Ibid.*

What a wonderful sentence. By the way, what number is the first? How many numbers are there before first? None. Then, before either a son or a daughter

chooses a companion, according to this, they're to do what? They're to consult who? Parents. And they're to do this when? First. Notice it doesn't say they're to do it before the wedding. They're to do it before what? The selecting of the companion. What's another word for "select?" Choose. That's right. Pick out.

"I put the question to you as it should be: Should a son or daughter select a companion without first consulting the parents, when such a step must materially affect the happiness of parents if they have any affection for their children? And should that child, notwithstanding the counsel and entreaties of his parents, persist in following his own course? I answer decidedly..."

What?

"...No; not if he never marries" *Ibid.*

Quite an emphatic statement, isn't it?

I was counseling with a young person several months ago; she came to me for advice. This young woman was quite certain that the young man she was planning to marry was just the one the Lord wanted her to have, but her mother just couldn't see it.

Well, I referred her to this, and I said, "Would you expect me as a minister to change what this says? To tell you, never mind, it's all right if you are sure that it's the Lord's will." What authority do I have to change this? There's a man you know over on the Tiber that thinks he can change things that have been written by Divine Inspiration. He has gotten nearly the whole Christian world accepting his change every Sunday, hasn't he? Do you agree with him?

Well, tell me, if he doesn't have the authority to change the Fourth Commandment, do either you or I have the authority to change the Fifth Commandment? And you notice how the prophet puts the finger on the Fifth Commandment in the very next sentence?

"The fifth commandment forbids such a course. 'Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' Here is a commandment with a promise which the Lord will surely fulfill to those who obey. Wise parents will never select companions for their children without respect to their wishes" *Ibid.*

But I'll just let you in on a secret, in case you don't know it already. There is something about the natural human heart that just *detests* the slightest semblance of anybody choosing for them, in this matter.

Let me tell you of an experience that happened less than a week ago—not here, not any place that any of you know anything about. But I want to tell you something because it's just an example of what's going on all the time.

A young man and a young woman were engaged. They were planning to be married before many months went by—both members of the remnant church. The young man was spending a few days at the home of the parents of the young woman to whom he was engaged.

Presently, as they were visiting, he said to her, "Now, look here. I've made up my mind." He said, "I've had all of this parent stuff that I can take." He said, "I'm going to give you three days to make up your mind. And if you want to marry me, fine, we'll run off to a neighboring state and be married where we don't have to wait for a license." I'm not going to wait for the parents' approval. "And if you don't want that, after three days, you let me know and it's all off."

And to the honor of God and to the honor of that young woman, do you know what she said? She said, "Well, I don't need three days. I can tell you right now. It's off right now."

When I heard that, I said, "Praise the Lord!"

I don't know them very well, but I can just tell you this, friends. It just could be that if either one of them had fully followed all the counsel that we've been studying in these classes, that they would never have even gotten that far. What do you think? Because, according to what we've studied, the time for that bridge to be crossed, the bridge of parental counsel and parental consent and active participation in the selection, is not up here in the final steps; it's way down here in the preliminary steps. Do you see what a world of trouble that saves?

This is one of the biggest things I can teach you in this class. The time to get counsel is before your mind is set in a certain direction. Of course, the counsel should continue all the way up. Now, this sometimes happens—for we're dealing with real life in this class; we're not just dealing with a lot of theory—it sometimes happens that a parent, either a father or a mother, or both, may agree for young people to court, but later, as things open up, their attitude may turn decidedly negative.

In that case, what should a young person do? I was talking with a young person who found himself in that situation not too long ago, in a distant state. And he was perplexed. He said, "Well, after all, I think my mother approved this once, but she doesn't now." "Well," I said, "After all, are you going to blame your mother because, in a closer acquaintance, she's gotten her eyes opened a bit? Are you? After all, what's she for? Just a rubber stamp, and the earlier that you can get her to put her okay on it, and then leave her out of it, is that what it's for?" Why, no. As we need the counsel of God at every step, so we need, at every step, the counsel of God-fearing parents and God-appointed advisors.

In fact, the *nearer* we get to the final step of marriage itself, the more important it is to check every point and get every bit of counsel we can. And just as

it's possible for young people to enter sincerely into courtship, thinking that this may be the Lord's leading, and may later find that it isn't God's will, so with the attitude of the parents. The parents may be clear enough in it to say, "Well, go ahead and go together, and see what the Lord leads, as you visit together and as you go together for a time." But that doesn't mean that the parent, at *that point*, is giving away either the son or the daughter in marriage. They are merely entering in, intelligently and sympathetically, into a study of the thing.

That leads me to this fifth point of courtship itself. What is Christian courtship? Well, my dear friend, Christian courtship is the sincere endeavor of two young people to find out whether it is God's will that they be married.

Courtship is not for fun. Oh, no. It's too serious for that. Somebody may say, "Is there no joy to it?" Oh, yes. There can be a great deal of joy to it. The Lord desires that every experience we enter into with *Him* will be one of joy. Baptism is a most beautiful and joyous experience. Isn't it? But wouldn't you be horrified to hear somebody say, "I was baptized last week and oh, what fun it was!"? Wouldn't you be horrified? I hope you would.

I warn you about that word "fun"—the word itself, and a lot of things it stands for. Whatever it means, my friends, "fun" is not the word to associate with courtship. It's a downright serious business. It can be a *happy* experience, but it's serious.

I wish you would turn to page 44 of your *Adventist Home*. We read a few words from the opening page of this chapter, page 43, earlier in our study tonight. This is "The Great Decision." This chapter has some very precious instruction on the matter of courtship.

What is the heading of that first paragraph? "Make Haste Slowly."

"Few have correct views of the marriage relation. Many seem to think that it is the attainment of perfect bliss; but if they could know one quarter of the heartaches of men and women that are bound by the marriage vow in chains that they cannot and dare not break, they would not be surprised that I trace these lines. Marriage, in a majority of cases, is a most galling yoke. There are thousands that are mated but not matched" *Ibid.*, page 44.

What does that mean: "mated but not matched"? They are married, but they don't fit. They're not compatible. That's grounds for divorce, isn't it? Well, it may be in the courts of the world, but not in the court of Heaven. Once the vows have been said and the marriage consummated, those vows must stand. And then follows a most difficult adjustment.

"Marriage, in a majority of cases, is a most galling yoke. There are thousands that are mated but not matched. The books of heaven are burdened with the woes, the wickedness, and the abuse that lie hidden under the marriage mantle. This is why I would warn the young

who are of marriageable age to make haste slowly in the choice of a companion" *Ibid.*

Would you say then, that courtship should be thought of like a whirlwind affair? No. Is it something in which the gallant lover comes in and sweeps the girl off her feet with candy and flowers and all the rest? That's not the picture, is it? No.

"Well," somebody says, "don't you think there is any place for love and affection?"

Yes, but not in the beginning of courtship, friends. That isn't the time for it. That isn't the time for it. I want to say to every earnest young person: never give your heart away; never yield your affections until all the questions that need to be settled have been settled. Love is a most precious thing. And in God's ideal plan, it is to be held in your heart to be given to one and one only.

And this relates not merely to the physical union, which of course, if one is following the Bible, is not to be entered into until after the marriage, but it also relates to those earlier expressions of affection—the caress, the kiss, and even the words of love and affection. They belong better to the period of engagement than to the period of courtship.

You see, dear friends, the only girl that a young man has the right to love in a meaningful way is *the* one that God has given him. When he stands at the marriage altar, he's going to promise before God and angels that he will forsake all others and keep himself only unto *her* as long as they both shall live. Unless he's learned to do that *before* marriage, he'll find it difficult to do *after* marriage.

So, courtship, *Christian* courtship, is not a matter of showing how much you love somebody hoping that they will be won by your efforts. Christian courtship is a serious period of earnest attempt to find out what best pleases the Lord.

You see, if we followed these steps up here, here is a young man and a young woman and their counselors—the young man's counselors and the young woman's counselors—are all agreed that these two young people should court. But what are they going to do? Those young people are going to study together. They are going to go together, and this is the *time* for going together. One of the best places to go together is in each other's homes or in the work of God, in connection with missionary endeavor, in connection with practical life, seeing each other in a variety of circumstances. And neither one should make any attempt to fool the other. Oh, no.

Notice this, page 45, the top of the page:

"Weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny" *Ibid.*, page 45.

The young man who's courting a young woman should watch her under all circumstances: in her own home, in the homes of other people, at Sabbath school, at church, in missionary work.

"Weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny" *Ibid.*

The same with a young woman; she should watch how that young man reacts under this circumstance and that circumstance and the other. Notice the next paragraph:

"Examine carefully to see if your married life would be happy or inharmonious and wretched" *Ibid.*

It lists some questions that should be asked. Turn over to the next page:

"Here are things which should be considered: Will the one you marry bring happiness to your home?" *Ibid.*, page 46.

Then it lists some more questions. Next paragraph:

"In your choice of a wife study her character" *Ibid.*

This is one of the things courtship is for, to get *acquainted* with the one who possibly may be the one of God's choice. And it lists question after question here, page after page. These paragraphs need to be studied carefully by all young people who are moving toward courtship.

All right, this is all we'll study tonight. Our next class will be Saturday night at 6:00. Let us stand for the benediction.

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee so much for the simplicity of choosing to please Thee—always to be trying to find out what best pleases the Lord. This is our choice tonight, and we thank Thee that when this is settled, everything else fits into place. We rejoice in the reality of Thy leading and the assurance that no good thing will Thou withhold from those who let Thee make the choice. We thank Thee in Christ's name, amen.

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