

Godly Qualities to Look for in a Mate (Part 2)

Over the past couple months, we have been talking about Biblical principles of courtship and marriage. At the very beginning of this series of messages, I made this all-important statement: “A person’s sense of completeness does *not* come from a relationship with a spouse: rather, it comes from a relationship with *God*.” A person can be *seemingly* happily married, and *seemingly* “have it all together,” insofar as family life is concerned, yet have a gnawing emptiness in his soul. Why? Because God created men and women to have a relationship with Him; but when *sin* entered into man’s heart in the Garden, it *separated* us from God. That is why God, in His incredible love for us, made a way for us to be reconciled to Him. He sent His only begotten Son to pay the full penalty of our sin on the cross. When a person repents of his sin and trusts in Christ, and in His sacrifice, that person is declared righteous, and is placed “in Christ”; and Christ then fills that “hole.” In **Colossians 2:10**, Paul wrote these words to Christians: “***And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.***” It matters not whether you be married or single: *Christ* is the only one who can make you “complete.” In fact, Jesus said that there are some eunuchs (life-long single people) “***which were so born from their mother’s womb***” (**Matthew 19:12**). In others words, there are some people in whom God did not place the usual drive to have a married relationship, because He intends for them to serve Him as a single person (after they are saved, of course). Daniel, Jeremiah, and other godly people are examples of people who were created to be eunuchs for the Lord: and throughout their lives, they found their joy and fulfilment in their God! God is All-in-All for *everyone* who has placed his faith in Him.

Yet, after a believer’s relationship with the Lord, there are certain *earthly* relationships which should have first place. For a child, the number-one earthly relationship should be his relationship with his parents. Until a young person comes to the marriage altar, his heart should belong to his dad and mum. However, *after* marriage, the number-one relationship in a person’s life becomes the relationship with one’s husband or wife. If you be married, no other *earthly* relationship (not even your relationship with your children) is more important than your relationship with your husband or your wife!

That is why it is extremely important that a single Christian *know* what godly qualities to look for in a mate. We’re talking about the person with whom you will spend your *life*! Marriage is not a “throw-away” thing: it is permanent. When you get married, you become “yoked together” to a partner for life. That is why you need to be sure that the person whom you will marry is a believer, so that both of you are *spiritually* yoked together under the same Master. When *Christ* is driving the plough, both husband and wife have the same mind (the mind of Christ). This means that they both have the *ability* to pull together in the right direction.

However, even though believers have been *given* the mind of Christ, not all believers are *yielding* to the mind of Christ to the extent that they should be. That is why it is vitally important not only to marry a believer, but to marry a believer who loves God with all his (or her) heart. It is also vitally important that *you* love God with all your heart before you get married! A Christian couple doesn’t need to have been saved for years and years before they are in a position to be married; however, they *should* both have a certain level of maturity in their relationship with God. They should both have a love for God’s Word, a growing prayer life, and a solid commitment to serve God in their local church. They should be separated from the lusts, amusements, entertainment, and pleasures of the world. All these things are marks of spiritual maturity.

The title of today’s message is ***Godly Qualities to Look for in a Mate (Part 2)***. In this message, we will learn two more marks of spiritual maturity to look for in a mate (and to have yourself).

I. Marry a believer (and *be* a believer) who is prepared for the responsibilities of marriage.

We live in an age in which countless young people are direly unprepared for the responsibilities of marriage. Decades of evolution, humanism, gross materialism, endless amusement and entertainment, secular psychology, socialism, feminism, and the satanic “do as thou wilt” doctrine, have turned everything on its head. Confusion reigns. Up is down and down is up. Few people know their proper role as men and women, or how to carry out their role. Countless young people

are growing up in broken homes, without dads (or without any kind of father figure); and the fruit of it is awful. Children are growing up without any sense of how to be a husband and father, or a wife and mother. Sadly, even in many seemingly strong Christian homes, parents are not actively *training* their children to be godly, responsible husbands and wives one day. Without this training, even many saved young people are largely unprepared for the responsibilities of marriage.

The responsibilities of marriage are vast; but they could be summed up in one simple statement. The responsibility of both the husband and wife is to *leave, cleave, and weave*.

Genesis 2:21-24

In the first wedding ceremony in human history, the LORD Himself said that a man shall ***“leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.”*** Childhood should be a time of happy memories; but it is not all play time. It is *training* time. Parents should be instilling in their children the mind-set that one day they will *leave* dad and mum’s home, *cleave* to a husband or wife, and create a new home—for a lifetime. That word ***“cleave”*** is translated from the Hebrew word *dabaq*, which means “to abide fast; to cling tightly; to be joined tightly together; to keep fast; to stick.” Our children should not have the slightest notion that if things do not go well in their future marriage, they may always run back home to mum and dad (or to anyone else). They should know that the new home they will create *is* their home. There is no going back. The man is captain; the wife is chief officer, under the captain; the children are the mates; and there is no deserting ship! (Should the husband or wife desert ship, it will be to the peril of all on board.)

When a marriage takes place, there is a transfer of leadership. Up to this point, the father has been the young lady’s head. However, when she makes her vows, she comes under the headship of her husband; and if her husband be a believer (as he should be), the Lord Jesus Christ is *his* Head. In **1 Corinthians 11:3** Paul said, ***“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man.”***

When a couple is married, a new union has been created; and the man is the head of that union (after Christ). This means that the man must be prepared to *lead*. The man must have a strong sense of his responsibility; and he must know what his responsibilities are. A man who is still clinging to and depending upon his parents (or to anyone else) is in no position to be married! Young ladies, your role is not to be “mother” to your future husband, and to straighten him out. If you think you can “straighten your man out,” you are greatly mistaken! If a man have character flaws, the only person who can “straighten him out” is the Lord. If a man will not *submit* to the Lord, he will never change. You’d better be sure, long before marriage, that the man you are thinking to marry is submitting to *his* Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. You’d better be sure that he has godly character, and that he is prepared to lead *you* in the right way. Your husband is to lead, guard, and protect you and your future children.

You see, leadership is not measured by physical strength, or even by the ability to make money and provide materially. A man *should* work to support his family (and we will talk about that shortly); however, this is only part of his responsibility. The husband’s role is to lead his home *spiritually*!

1 Timothy 2:8-13

In this passage, Paul is giving instructions to Timothy concerning how the churches under his watch were to operate. Paul makes it clear that in the church, *men* are to lead in prayer. Women should not be leading the prayer meeting; the men should do so. *Men* are to lift up ***“holy hands”*** in prayer; and *men* are to teach the congregation. Now, God does not forbid women to teach children, or to instruct younger women. In fact, in **Titus 2**, Paul specifically commands the older women in the church to teach the younger women to be chaste, sober, and discreet, to love their husbands,

and to be keepers at home. However, women are *not* to teach or be in authority over *men*. Why? Because God ordained it so. As Paul put it, **“For Adam was first formed, then Eve.”**

Now, the same that is true in the church is true in the home. In the home, the husband is responsible for the spiritual welfare of every member of his house. It is *the husband's* responsibility to lead his family in prayer, and in reading of Scripture. It is the *husband's* responsibility to take his family to church at every opportunity, and to teach his children how to be saved, and how to live for God after they are saved. It is the *husband's* responsibility to fall on his face before God every day, and to pray for a hedge of spiritual protection around his family, and to ask for wisdom to lead them. It is the *husband's* responsibility to speak about the Lord and His ways with his family, from the time they get up in the morning to the time they go to bed. It is the *husband's* responsibility to listen to Christ's voice as he reads his Bible every day, and to listen closely to the teaching of God's Word when he is at church, so that he will be able to explain biblical truth to his family. Let's see what Paul told the Corinthians about this.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

In this passage, the Apostle Paul forbade women to **“speak”** in church (in other words, to *teach* men, or to ask questions that aren't really questions, but rather mini sermons). However, that's not all that Paul had to say. Paul went on to say that if the wives **“will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home.”** This means that the husband has the duty to pay close attention to the teaching of God's Word, so that he will be *able* to explain biblical doctrine to his wife. That requires diligent attention to God's Word, and a readiness to lead spiritually.

There is an unbiblical idea which many Christians have bought into for at least a couple generations; and it has wreaked havoc in countless Christian homes. The idea goes like this: “God created Adam to dress the garden, and to till the ground, and to provide for his family. God then created Eve to be a **‘help meet’** for the man.” They thus reason that “It is the man's responsibility to provide; and it is the woman's responsibility to teach the kids, and to bring them up in the Lord. Therefore,” they conclude, “If a man will focus on his *work*, the Lord will take care of his *family*. The kids will turn out all right if the man will just focus on his job of providing for his family.”

Folks, this philosophy is totally biblical! A father's job is not merely to provide materially; his job is to bring up his children in the **“nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4)**. The greatest part of that responsibility falls on the *man's* shoulders. Yet, many pastors not only have taught this unbiblical idea to their churches, but they have practiced it in their own homes. Consequently, many pastors have lost the hearts of their children, and have even lost their marriages. As a pastor, I can testify that a pastor's job is *extremely* busy and burdensome. A pastor works long hours, and is on call 24-7. However, I dare not allow the work of the ministry to consume me to the point that I neglect my family, and fail to lead my own wife and children spiritually. It is *not* my wife's job to lead my children: it is *my* primary responsibility. Every Christian young man needs to realise, long before he begins to think about marriage, that it will be *his* primary responsibility to pray with his family, to read God's Word to them, and to teach them. A man who says, “Well, my wife reads the Bible to the kids: I'm too busy with my work” is failing in his duty. His kids *will* most likely rebel; and he *will* lose his kids to the world!

The responsibility for both husband and wife is to **“leave”** father and mother, and to **“cleave”** to each other. But that's not all. Husbands and wives also have the responsibility to “weave.” Remember what God said in **Genesis 2:24**? He said that a man shall **“leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”** Being **“one flesh”** is the *physical* aspect of marriage. (I discreetly refer to it as “weaving.”) The physical aspect of marriage is very enjoyable; and it is a *holy* thing. God designed it to knit the husband and wife's hearts together in a powerful way. But that's not the only purpose of it. In **Malachi 2:15**, the

LORD says that He gave Adam his wife so that **“he might seek a godly seed.”** In other words, God instituted marriage in order to produce *children*, so that those children might come to know Him personally, and live godly lives of service to Him. This is pleasing and glorifying to God.

Now, it isn't God's will for everyone to have children. God ordains some people to be single, and to serve Him in that capacity. For His own purposes, God does not enable some married couples to have children, either. However, every man and woman who *does* enter marriage should do so with the heart-preparation to bring up children for the Lord, if God should enable them to have children. Every Christian young person who desires to be married should be mentally, emotionally, and spiritually prepared to take on the task of being a godly father or a godly mother.

Now, up to this point, I have focused mainly on the man's responsibility. I would now like to address the ladies. Ladies, you *also* have the responsibility to “leave, cleave, and weave.” Every Christian young lady should be preparing herself, spiritually and emotionally, to leave her parents; to be a help meet for her husband; to raise children; and to keep a household (should it be the Lord's will for her to be married). Contrary to what our modern society says, being a wife and mother is an unspeakably important job! The influence that a mother welds upon her children's lives (for good or bad) is almost impossible to measure. Let's see what Solomon's mother taught him about the responsibilities of a wife and mother.

Proverbs 31:1, 10-31

What we've just read is a **“prophecy”** which God gave to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon. (By the way, Bathsheba was not always a virtuous woman, herself! Yet, God did an amazing transformation in her life, and used her to give us this powerful Scripture.) Young men, if you want to know what to look for in a wife, God has given it to you right here! A **“virtuous woman”** is a woman in whom you can **“trust,”** because she has placed *her* trust in God. A **“virtuous woman”** will do you **“good, and not evil”** all the time. She isn't selfish or vengeful. She doesn't belittle you, tease you, play games with your heart, or use jealousy or guilt as weapons to get what she wants. She is strong and resolute in mind and spirit, because she knows the precepts of God's Word, and is firm in her principles. She isn't wasteful or idle: instead, she is wise and industrious with her resources, and works hard from morning to night (and doesn't whine about it). Her mouth is not filled with cutting or sarcastic words, but with **“the law of kindness.”** She looks well to the ways of her household. (Before marriage, she looks well to the ways of her *parents'* household, and does all in her power to help and honour them. By this, you may know that she will look well to her *husband's* household.) She has godly wisdom, because she fears the LORD.

Young man, don't look at the outward appearance of a young lady. God says that beauty is **“vain”** (empty)! Look for *these* qualities in a young lady. A lady who isn't over-zealous to do hard work is *not* a woman in whom you may safely trust. A woman who loves to blow lots of money on things she doesn't need is *not* a **Proverbs 31** woman. A woman who doesn't like to get up early, and who sleeps in as often as she can, is *not* a woman who is prepared for marriage. A woman who “lives for weekends” and “girls' days out,” and who spends most of her time chatting with friends on social media, is not a woman who is prepared to look well to the ways of a household. A woman who isn't interested in giving up the pursuit of a nice career, and isn't thrilled about the prospect of having children, is *not* the kind of woman whose children will one day praise her. A woman who tends to have a hurtful and cutting tongue is *not* a woman in whom you may safely trust.

A virtuous woman is prepared to “leave, cleave, and weave.” A godly *man* is prepared to “leave, cleave, and weave.” There is a serious dearth of such men and women today; but they *do* exist. Young person, *wait* until God brings such a person into your life—no matter how long you must wait! Should you be married, *be* such a person. Know your responsibility, and do it.

II. Marry a believer (and *be* a believer) who is a hard worker, and a faithful steward.

We have already talked about the fact that a man needs to be prepared to lead his family spiritually. The woman, also, needs to be prepared to instruct and guide her children in the ways of the Lord. Spiritual leadership is absolutely foundational to the responsibilities of marriage. However, make no mistake about it: marriage requires plain old *hard work*. Now, being a hard worker doesn't mean that a person is walking closely with the Lord. It doesn't even mean that that person is saved. However, a saved person who *is* walking closely with the Lord *will* have the character quality of being a hard worker, and a faithful steward of resources.

Let's talk about the man first. Before a man says his vows, he must be mentally and financially prepared to support his wife and children. It is not unreasonable of a father to ask the young man who wishes to marry his daughter, "Do you have a steady job? Are you able to support my daughter? Are you in debt?" It is, in fact, a father's *duty* to ask such questions. A man who doesn't have a hard work ethic has no business starting a family. Now, of course, things happen. Hard times hit, and people get laid off from jobs. However, if a man be laid off from work, he should make it his full-time job to *find* another job! He should search relentlessly.

God ordained for men to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. The drive to work hard in order to provide for one's family is something that God has hard-wired into every man. A man's work gives him a sense of worth and purpose. (By the way, ladies, don't ever belittle your husband's work! When your husband comes home from a long day's work, don't say, "Well, you haven't worked as hard as *I* have today!" Praise him for his work, and he will praise *you*. This is what Solomon called "*the law of kindness.*" We'll talk more about that in a few weeks!)

Hard work gives a man a sense of purpose. For a *Christian* man, though, the desire to work should be far higher and nobler than this. A Christian man should be motivated to work not only out of necessity, and not only because it brings him a sense of purpose, but because his work is *glorifying to God*. Let's go back to the beginning, and see what God had to say about work.

Genesis 2:8, 15 / 3:16-19

Work is not the curse of sin; the *hard toil* that now *accompanies* work is the curse of sin. *Weeds and thorns* are the curse of sin; but *work* was ordained by God before man ever sinned. God commissioned Adam to dress and keep the Garden. He ordained work from the very beginning. So, what does this mean? This means that we'd better be teaching our kids to *work*! A little play time is fine—after they get their chores done! (And they should be given *plenty* of chores.) Every day is training time. You are training your kids for marriage; and you should let them know it. Many times my own kids have wondered out loud, "I wonder whom I will marry some day?"; and I have had to remind them, "If you're going to be married someday, you'd better be learning to pick up your room. You'd better be finishing your chores completely, and with a good attitude. If you don't learn to finish a job now, you won't be able to hold down a job one day; and you won't be able to support a family." Our three oldest kids have missed meals on a number of occasions because they didn't do a chore, or because they didn't finish it completely before dinner. This isn't called being a mean dad; it's called "bringing them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord"!

1 Timothy 5:3-8

2 Thessalonians 3:10

In Bible times, there was no government welfare system. That meant that it was the *family's* responsibility to care for a mother, a grandmother, or an aunt, if she were a widow. Paul specifically charged that if a Christian man had a mother or aunt who was a widow, it wasn't the church's responsibility to care for her: it was *his* responsibility. In fact, Paul said that "*if any man*

provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (unbeliever).” If a man be responsible to care for his aged mother, how much more so is he responsible to care for his own wife and children? That is why Paul said, ***“If any would not work, neither should he eat.”***

This is strong language, isn’t it? In our modern world, this would be considered “insensitive.” However, God makes no apology for it. In **Proverbs 24:30-34** Solomon wrote, ***“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.”*** If a slothful man bring *himself* to poverty through his laziness, he will also bring his *family* to poverty. Young ladies, make sure that the man you marry is a hard worker. Fathers, make sure that the young man to whom you give your daughter is a hard worker. Make sure that you are *training* your children to be hard workers.

Now, a person who is a hard worker (and who is working for the right reason—namely, to glorify God) will also be a faithful steward. Hard work and faithful stewardship are two character qualities that go hand-in-hand. The Bible says much about stewards. A “steward” is someone who manages the resources of his master. Well, guess what? We who know Christ as Saviour are stewards of *God’s* resources. He is our Master. Our possessions are not really our own: they are Christ’s. Christ has entrusted them to us, and commissioned us to use those resources to serve Him. In His graciousness, He has allowed us to meet our own needs with those resources, as well. (All He asks is that we give 10% of it to Him—and even more than 10%, if we dare to trust Him more!) In **1 Corinthians 4:2** Paul said, ***“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”*** In **Luke 16:10** Jesus said, ***“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”*** God doesn’t measure a man by how much money he has: He measures a man by whether or not he uses what he has to serve God!

God expects every believer to be faithful and wise stewards of the money and resources that He has given us. This means that a young man who is anticipating marriage should have this godly quality. For one thing, he should be tithing to his local church! Having tithed through both hard times and good times for many years, I can affirm that I cannot afford *not* to tithe! God rewards faithfulness. It’s that simple! I’m not rich: but I’ve never been in debt. God has always supplied my family’s needs. And speaking of debt, God has a lot to say about that, as well.

Proverbs 22:26-27

God repeatedly warns us in Scripture about the danger of “striking hands” (putting oneself in debt), or making oneself “surety” for a debt (making oneself a guarantor for a friend’s debt). It’s not wrong to finance a house, or a car; but you’d better be very sure that you are prepared to pay (unless you want your bed to be yanked out from under you)! Debt is a terrible thing. That is why a father should ask a young man who wishes to marry his daughter, “Are you in debt?” If he be in debt, he is in not in a position to be married yet, until he gets his finances in order. It may be because of an unforeseen calamity that he is in debt; and that is to be pitied. However, it doesn’t change the fact that he is not prepared for marriage until he can support a wife. More often than not, though, debt problems are due to poor management of resources (i.e., spending money on things you don’t need). God promises to reward His people when they manage their resources wisely, and for His glory. David wrote, ***“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”*** By the way, young ladies, don’t even think of marrying someone who gambles! In **Proverbs 28:22** the Lord says, ***“He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.”*** People who gamble do

not gamble because they are poor; they are poor because they gamble! God does not bless those who seek to get rich quick, without having to work for it: He blesses hard work and industry.

Now, before we close this morning, let's talk about the woman's role in regard to hard work and stewardship. A woman should, like her husband, be a hard worker, and a faithful steward. She should be frugal and wise with the money that God has given her. As Solomon said, a virtuous woman seeks wool and flax, and works willingly with her hands. She also **"perceiveth that her merchandise is good."** In other words, she knows the value of things. She is frugal and wise in the management of household needs, and is willing to work with her own hands to save money. However, management of material resources is not the half of it. A woman's job is to be a "keeper at home." The greatest "resource" that has been entrusted to her is her *family*.

Titus 2:1-8

I wish I had time this morning to focus on all these commands both to men and women; but the main truth I would like to emphasise is that young ladies are to be **"keepers at home."** That word **"keeper"** is translated from the Greek word *oikouros*, which literally means "home guard." A woman is a *guard* to her family. For one thing, **she guards her husband** from wily women who might wish to steal his heart. She does this by praising her husband, and reverencing him; by letting him know every day how much she loves and values him; and by having a meek and quiet spirit instead of a nagging and complaining spirit. **She guards her children** from the sinful world by building high walls of spiritual protection around them. She keeps her kids' hearts by spending time with them, and reading God's Word to them. She shields her children from worldly kids. She is *very* particular about who is allowed to be their friends. She shields her children from wicked invaders that can silently creep into the house (through the telly, video games, iphones, etc.). She may have to work part-time in order to make ends meet for her family; but she is home when she needs to be home. She isn't concerned about building a career: instead, she sees being a wife and mother, and bringing up children to love and serve God, as the greatest career, and the highest of honours. It also goes without saying that *she is at home!* She isn't running around with her friends all the time. There's nothing wrong with having good friendships and godly fellowship with other Christian ladies; but a woman needs to be prepared to be a *wife* and a *mom*, and not to be running out with friends constantly. How can you be a "keeper at home"....*if you're not home?*

Being a godly husband or wife is a high honour; but it is a lot of work. However, it is one of the highest earthly joys that a person can have, after his relationship with God. Young person, make sure that you marry someone with these godly qualities; and if you be married, *have* these qualities!

Conclusion: In closing this morning, I would ask you this: Do you know for sure that you are saved and on your way to Heaven? We've talked a lot about the work that is involved in marriage; but I want you to realise that there is *no* amount of work that you can do to earn your salvation. **(Quote Titus 3:5 and Isaiah 64:6.)** Christ already did the work for your salvation when He died on the cross and paid for your sins. You must simply repent (turn from sin and self to God), and trust completely in what Christ did for you. For those of you who are saved, and married, I would ask you this: Are you fulfilling these responsibilities of marriage? If you are not married, are you *preparing* yourself to fulfil these responsibilities, should the Lord will for you to be married one day? Allow God to mould you into the man woman that He wants you to be!