

Preparing Your Children for Marriage – *Gen 2:18-24*

Children of the Conquest #13

Introduction – We began this series focusing on the purpose of children which is the pleasure of God in the conquest of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's plan for the salvation of the world includes the promise of multi-generational faithfulness (Deut 7:9) and it takes generations to establish a long-standing culture. While children are a sweet fruit of the marriage covenant, they are not just for us, but ultimately for God (Mal 2:15). This martial exercise of training up children in the Lord is central to the evangelization and discipleship of the world. And is it not obvious that we have many generations yet to go? How then are we to prepare our children for marriage?

The Promises, the Covenant, and Marriage – The Bible begins with a God-ordained marriage for the first Adam (Gen 2:18-24). The Bible ends with a God-ordained marriage for the second Adam (Rev 21:2, 9-10). The Bible teaches us that every marriage is a proclamation of this Gospel; this God-ordained marriage (Eph 5:31-32). And this means that children and families, clans and communities, cities and nations, generations upon generations, are all a part of the story of the building and spread of Christendom.

God desires faithful husbands and wives because He desires godly offspring (Mal 2:15). We know that God made promises to Abraham of innumerable descendants (Gen 15:1-6) and the blessings to families (Gen 12:1-3). We see that this promise is fulfilled ultimately, not in ethnic descendants alone, but in sons and daughters of the faith, that is, Christians (Gal 3:29). We have the hope that this will spread, by the grace of God through the declaration of the gospel and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the whole world (Matt 28:18f, Is 11:9). Therefore, we must enter into this topic in the context of the covenant as well. And remember, covenant-keeping is promise-believing (John 6:29).

A Culture of Grace, Forgiveness, and Transformation (1 Cor 6:9-11) – A quick side note: Let us never forget from whence we have come, and welcome those into our midst based upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and not upon past histories. This is the gospel.

Going and Giving Under Authority (Gen 2:24, Ps 78:63, Jer 7:34) – Seeing lots of weddings and the fruit of glad and faithful marriages is a sign of the Lord's blessing upon a people. But also note from these verses that, in the establishment of new families, God does not instruct us to treat men and women the same. Men marry and women are given in marriage. This requires young men to become responsible covenant heads and young women to be honored through covenant security, protection and love at all times.

Fathers and Daughters – Two things have happened in our society. Fathers have not provided masculinity (Def'n - the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility) and covenantal headship in their homes. Second, women in general, daughters in particular, are now seen as autonomous individuals, ripe for the picking. But daughters, in a biblical society and in a godly home, remain under the authority of their father until there is a transfer of that authority to a man approved by their father.

Authority Seen (Num 30:3-16) – Headship requires responsibility and protection. In this passage we see that men have the authority to overrule vows made by their daughters and by their wives. The biblical context is the father providing loving protection and unselfish care.

Responsibility Until Marriage (Deut 22:13-21) – This passage seems so strange to us, and culturally it is. But the principle is clear. High standards of sexual purity are required of all God's people, virginity is a high virtue, it is required of all God's people before marriage, and these high standards all fall upon the father.

(I highly recommend Douglas Wilson's book, *"Her Hand in Marriage"* for all parents to read, especially for Dads to read with their daughters, and for young men interested in pursuing such daughters).

Weird Traditions – In the midst of ignorance for some, and high-handed rebellion for others, several generations have abandoned the Word. We have mistreated our daughters and poorly prepared our sons. But in today's wedding ceremonies, in sentimental fashion, we still keep vestiges of the very principles we have rejected. For instance -

Dressed in White – It is breathtaking to watch a beautifully dressed woman escorted down the aisle brought to her bridegroom. We need to honor chastity (2 Cor 11:2). Young unmarried women should learn about the language of clothing, and dress to

honor their father as a virgin. There is something glorious and strong about a virgin daughter freely agreeing to be given to a man by her father, and then giving herself to that man.

The Father as Escort – Here is the picture of protection and love. The head of one family, having taken responsibility for the spiritual and physical chastity of his daughter, escorts her (with her full permission), to a new covenant head.

The Engagement Ring – This promise harkens back to the dowry (Ex 22:16-17) which was not the sales-price of the bride, but was a pledge given to the father in case of abandonment by the man. Husbands are giving themselves and all that they have to their wives, and this is promised on the day of betrothal. Pagan-style bachelor parties are an affront to women and an abomination to God.

Vows – Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman before God. It is His institution and He establishes the rules. A covenant always comes with attendant blessings and curses and so must be entered into with great sobriety.

Bridesmaids/Groomsmen – Marriage is a public covenant. Families are the foundations of community, of the redeemed culture, and so the public (church, family, and civil government) witnesses and has an active interest in the success of this new family.

“You May Kiss the Bride” – Marriage is a sexual covenant. Sexual activity is prohibited by God until this moment. The wedding night is God’s introduction to the holy marriage bed. Christians are not to be prudes or uncomfortable with sex and sexuality. We are to redeem what has been perverted and nearly destroyed, not by throwing it away, but reclaiming and enjoying it for what God has intended.

Re-establishing Cultural Norms from Scripture – In Psalm 78:63 we see the result of the Lord’s judgment upon His unfaithful people. Fire consumed the young men and their maidens were not given in marriage. Society crumbled, and it could be described by the lack of faithful marriages taking place.

Recognize Godly Lines of Authority (As a Blessing) – A young man must understand that he is to pursue and initiate with the father of a woman he is interested in. The father is to have complete oversight and direction in this interest, and a wise father is doing this in the context of a bank account of trust, love, and wisdom he has deposited in the relationship with his daughter over years.

Preparing Sons – A son’s preparation begins with his own devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, which must be thorough in doctrine and practice. He should be learning the special manners men show towards women from his father and the men in his church-community (and this is something we all need to recover). It should be practiced for years, first towards his mother, and then towards his sisters. Growing up with a high view of women will be a great protection for him as he enters adolescence and fights temptations. He will also grow up seeing that most dating practices today are antithetical to showing such honor.

Preparing Daughters – Of course, a daughter’s preparation begins the same, with her devotion to the Lord, and with a deep understanding about what it means that God made her female. She has observed her father’s behavior and ought to only be interested in a man she can respect as much if not more than him. In a trusting relationship with her father (and her mother), she will find protection and wisdom to send away those who are not qualified, and careful scrutiny over time of a potential suitor who will love her as her father does.

God’s Grace at the Center – The subject of courtship, the Bible-passages, the principles and then the specific applications for your family, should produce much and ongoing discussion in your home. It is a subject that should be gone over and over again with a view to what God has promised and what God is doing. Most likely, as with all the subjects in this series, there is much for us to repent of and turn with faith to God. There is much to recover as a community and culture. God meets us with grace right here – right now.