

## “A Letter To A Son About Marriage”

How should a Christian parent guide his son when it comes to marriage? Since many Christian parents feel ill-equipped to answer that question, here is a generic letter that provides guidance. It is my prayer that dads will find it useful in directing their sons. Likewise, I pray it will be helpful for single moms (or those in marriages where the dad is not taking the initiative to instruct).

Dear Son,

God has made you in such a way you have quite an interest in girls. This is a good thing. Though you think about and notice girls everywhere you go, you may not have marriage on your mind. Yet, it is something that is good to think about and prepare for ahead of time. Since I love you very much, here are some truths I would like to share with you that will help you apply to your choice of a spouse the wisdom of Proverbs 3:5-7, which says:

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart;*

*do not depend on your own understanding.*

<sup>6</sup> *Seek his will in all you do,*

*and he will show you which path to take.*

<sup>7</sup> *Don't be impressed with your own wisdom.*

*Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil.* (New Living Translation)

To begin, I know that you are bombarded daily at school, on television, from billboards, and from all forms of technology with visions of what the ideal woman is like. Most of these focus only upon her appearance. As a result, it is easy for you to conclude that what is most important is physical attraction. Please let God's Spirit shape your thinking on your image of the ideal future wife based upon biblical teaching. The godly woman, writes Paul, adorns herself “in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control...with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Such a woman has a heart for others, loves her family, wants to serve God and others, and, as such, she will be a great blessing to you (Prov. 31:10-31; Titus 2:4). Of course you should expect to be attracted to your future wife physically. A quick reading of the Song of Solomon supports this! Yet, remember there should be more to your attraction and more to her than that.

Also, remember the Bible teaches us that marriage is designed to provide a picture of how Christ relates to the Church and the Church to Christ (Ephesians 5:32), as well as how the persons of the Trinity are equal, yet different in their roles (1 Corinthians 11:3). Additionally, it is to provide companionship (Gen. 2:18), as well as the atmosphere in which godly children are to be raised (Malachi 2:15). This divine multi-faceted design for marriage demands that both husband and wife be new people who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior (John 3:1-16) and long to glorify God through their partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:3-6), their mutual pursuit of holiness (Hebrews 12:14), and the biblical training of their children (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4).

We should not be surprised, then, the Bible instructs believers that we must not marry unbelievers (1 Corinthians 7:39). After all, marriage is the most intimate of relationships with the greatest and most eternal of purposes. How can a Christian partner with a non-

Christian in such a close bond and expect to share the same passions for their life together (2 Corinthians 6:14)? How can they expect that an unbelieving spouse would want to train their children to know and serve Jesus Christ and to pray to those same ends? Without such commitment, training, and prayer, you most likely are setting your children up to stumble and to miss Christ (Matthew 18:5-6).

So, son, begin to pray now as to whether or not the Lord would have you marry. If he would, pray that you will find a wife who knows Jesus Christ as Savior, who loves God and others deeply (Matthew 22:37-40), who ultimately seeks her pleasure and treasure in Christ (Matthew 6:19-21; Philippians 1:21-23), who pursues holiness and purity (including sexual purity in relationships [1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Hebrews 13:4]), who seeks to honor her parents (Exodus 20:12), and who wants to serve Christ passionately with her husband (Prov. 31:10-31; Eph. 5:21-24; 1 Peter 3:7).

Of course, to find that kind of wife, you must be that kind of man. Such a woman will not want a half-hearted Christian. She will desire someone who will lead the family from a godly example, who will love her like Christ loves the Church, and will be at the forefront of discipling your children and helping her grow for God's glory (Eph. 5:21-33; 6:4; Phil. 3:17). What this means is that the best preparation in which you can engage right now for marriage is for you to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Something else that is essential is for you to determine right now you will pursue purity in your relationships with women. Understand that the practice of Christ-accomplished, Spirit-empowered holiness in the present will make you that much stronger in pursuing such holiness as you seek to remain faithful later to your wife while facing off against the enemies of indwelling sin, Satan, and the world (Romans 7:15-25; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 5:14). What is more, remember that any girl with whom you spend time or in whom you become interested may be someone's future wife, she is a person made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-28), and if a Christian she is one who has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28), so treat her with great respect as a fellow heir of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7)!

Of course, your vision for what you believe God wants you to do (and where) must match her vision. If, for example, you believe God has called you and your future wife to serve Christ in urban compassion ministry or in overseas missions, yet, you meet someone who believes God wants her and her husband to live on a farm, this may be an indication God does not want you to marry—especially if you cannot bring your two visions together.

You might think to yourself that it is impossible to be such a young man or to find such a young woman out there to marry! On the one hand, I tend to agree with you, simply because young men and women do not naturally turn out with the characteristics I have described in this letter (Romans 3:10-12). Yet, on the other hand, "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26) and so he is saving and molding young men and women into this kind of future husbands and wives every second of the day.

What should you do that you might find such a woman?

(1) Pray. Ask God to bring you to such a woman, if it is his pleasure for you to marry.

Know that it is only by God's grace through Christ you will have a godly marriage and family (Ps. 127:1; John 15:5).

(2) Act. As you pray, act out your convictions. Do not date any women whom you would not marry. Too many Christian men have thought to themselves, "It doesn't matter, since we are not serious and are only dating. We are not getting married." Yet, they find all too quickly they become attached and the next thing they know they are married to someone who does not share with them the same God-honoring, Christ-centered vision for life.

(3) Pursue. Pursue Jesus Christ ultimately (and not a wife), in holiness, purity, love, great passion, and without falling in love with the world (Philippians 3:1-11; 1 Timothy 3:9; 1 John 2:15-17). If you trust in him, he will make your path straight to that right woman, if marriage is what he has for you (Proverbs 3:5-7). Keep in mind that this kind of young woman will be looking for a young man marked by godliness. She will not be won merely by your strength, your boldness, or your courage. She also will not be won by your ungodly sexual pursuit of her.

(4) Hold on. Hold on tightly to the word of life, for this is how you pursue Christ and honor God (Philippians 3:16). Drink deeply and often from it and God will guide you.

Please know that I am praying for you and for your future spouse. May God strengthen you according to his gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ and may you glorify him always (Romans 16:25-27), not the least of which in whom you will marry!

With much love,

Your Dad (or Mom)