

Marriage and the Unmarried Christian, Part 2

Selected Scriptures

April 2, 2022

Well, welcome back everyone. This is the final message in our marriage series and as I said this morning, I want to pick up where we left off in 1 Corinthians 7:36. So you can turn there and we'll address Paul's answer to the question that was posed, back in verse 25, by the betrothed man or the engaged man in the Corinthian Church. And after we deal with that point, we'll broaden out a little bit to address some questions about living the single life in the church. Not going to repeat all of that I said this morning, obviously, but I'll just mention the points that I gave you this morning to kind of give you a chance to get settled and get to the 1 Corinthians 7:36, find your place in your notes and all the rest.

So we started saying that in point number one, number one, all unmarried Christians are indispensable. All unmarried Christians are indispensable. That's kind of a tautology. All

Christians are indispensable in the plan of God, and in the design of Christ and headship over his church. All Christians are indispensable. So of course, all unmarried Christians are indispensable as well. We reviewed Paul's instructions to the Corinthians, that's in chapter 12, about the nature of the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12 says, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves or free," We might legitimately insert there married or unmarried, "and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

We talked about the indispensable nature of every gift of a born again Christian, whom God has given to any, to the body of Christ in, in at large, but also the body of Christ specifically in any local context, in any local situation. So every single Christian, every single born again Christian, is a gift to a local church. Marital or any other status is ultimately irrelevant. Rather, we understand that God has so composed the body in order that, 1 Corinthians 12:25, "there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."

Unmarried and married Christians are woven together in the fabric of the local church, and it creates a beautiful tapestry that brings praise and glory to God. That's his design in the church, so all unmarried Christians are indispensable.

And then, secondly, our second point, two, some unmarried Christians are intentional. Some unmarried Christians are intentional. That is to say, some are intentional in the way that they live the Christian life. They embrace whatever God has given them, and whatever God has withheld from them either way. Either way is a gift from his grace. They follow that proverb, Proverbs 17:24, "The discerning sets his face toward wisdom, but the eyes of the fool are on the ends of the earth."

So we went from there to 1 Corinthians 7, this chapter that addresses various marital situations or statuses in the Church, and Paul is answering Corinthian questions. So we're kind of listening to Paul's Q&A with the Corinthian Church, and in that Q&A, we're going to have our own a little bit later, but in that Q&A, we were able to extract several principles to help



us live intentional Christian lives. And frankly, this can be applied to anybody in the church, no matter regardless of status.

So how do we build intentional Christian lives? That is, no matter what our status is, our situation, the condition of our lives, the circumstances. How do we live an intentional Christian life? We saw the principle of stability, really versus 1 to 28, huge section there. A principle of theology versus 29 to 31. And then finally that principle of simplicity and versus 32 to 35.

So guided by those principles any Christian can live an intentional life no matter what their status, condition, situation, circumstance, all that matters ultimately is Christ lived through us. Us living in Christ and Christ living in and through us. That may sound rather pious. All that matters is Christ, but it's true. It is true.

All that matters is Christ and living with a Christward focus and striving for Christ-likeness and conformity to Christ in our lives that does lead to true piety. When we ended this morning, though, we remembered that the guy from verse 25 still has his hand up. He's still waiting for an answer to his question, should I get married to my fiancé? We're kind of in a holding pattern here and I'm awaiting your answer.

So those answers are going to come now in the next, point three, number three, some unmarried Christians are eligible. What I mean by eligible is eligible to marry. Some unmarried Christians are eligible to get married. So those who have never been married but want to be married, they're eligible to be married. Those who have a biblically sanctioned divorce, that is conducted according to Scripture under the purview of the local church, under the oversight of its leadership. They too can be, in some cases free to be remarried, but I would caution that because there's just so much to, to unpack in those kind of situations and then those who are widows who want to marry. They are also free to remarry only in the Lord, but again, Paul says "I advise against it. If you've been married before, just trust me, the single life is better from my perspective."

So the question then from verse 25, Paul takes that up after saying all that, he takes it up again in verse 36. So look at your Bibles there. 1 Corinthians 7:36. "If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed. If his passions are strong and it has to be, let him do as he wishes. Let them marry, it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity, but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better."

Now, that is an answer to address the question of the betrothed. Those who are engaged, having never been married, and in this situation. Again, we need to stress this situation because we need to read this in light of, verse 26, what we called the present distress. A grain shortage in Corinth resulting in unrest and rioting uprisings. It was a dangerous, very uncertain time in the city and its surroundings.

So the question is what do we do with our betrothal, what do we do with our engagement in uncertain times? Do we go forward and consummate the marriage, or do we wait until social unrest dies down? When you understand the background, you understand the intent of the question, it kind of makes good sense, doesn't it? It's even a, it's even a good question coming from this Corinthian man. There is some risk, isn't there, getting married during uncertain and unstable times? As many of us know that even in the best of times young marriages can struggle and have great difficulty, challenges, finances are tight. Extra working hours for the man can mean there could be reduced security, safety, protection and all of that for the young wife at home, and especially if kids start coming, that becomes difficult as well as she's juggling a lot there in the home.

Considering the situation though, that the Corinthians, Corinthians are living in which, are not at all the best of times. Not at all the best of circumstances, but actually they face an uncertain future they face economic instability, social political unrest, perhaps even violence. While this might be the wise plan to extend the betrothal period and to postpone

finalizing and consummating the marriage. Keep in mind that during a betrothal period, first century and even going back centuries before that, the betrothal period was a very significant, it's not like our engagement, which is kind of looser.

Betrothal, was a strengthened form of our engagement. It really was tantamount to marriage legally. There was a contract involved with the family, and if a man broke that contract, man, he could be in for it legally. So very serious, very serious time. A betrothed couple was treated like a married couple.

Even though they weren't living together, the woman was still living in her father's house and the man was oftentimes, if he's a younger man especially, living in his father's house. He's preparing a place in his father's house and with his father's business and means to try to provide for this young wife, he's about to bring in, that betrothal period could last as, up to up to a year, sometimes longer, depending on the circumstances.

And at the end of that betrothal period, that's when the father sent his son to go get his bride, bring her back, and they were going to have a week long wedding. So it was a wedding festival and all the rest and then that's when they started living together as husband and wife and they were their own one flesh unit.

So this woman here in this situation she's still living in her parents' home. That means she's provided for, she's protected, she's safe and secure. So this is a loving, considerate, wise, a question that this husband to be is asking of Paul. He's trying to consider the provision and safety of his fiancé, his future wife. So if he can wait, better to wait, better to postpone removing her from that provision, protection, safety and comfort of her father's home in this situation.

Under these conditions though, and as we're seeing in the text, under these conditions in this situation, what is the determinative factor for Paul and his counsel? What's the determinant factor between verse 36 and verse 37? Because there's two different recommendations there. What determines

whether they postpone the wedding, which is the second situation, or go ahead with it right away, which is the first situation? Should they go ahead with it like he says in verse 36? Or should they postpone it, verse 37, and what is the determining factor here?

Paul says there's one factor, and it's a factor of self-control. Self-control, that is the determinative factor between the different council in verse 36 and verse 37. That's the contrast. It's between those who lack self-control in verse 36 or the man, if he lacks self-control, verse 36, and then if he is able to exercise self-control, verse 37.

So look first, there's, verse 36 there, "If anyone thinks he's not behaving properly." That word can mean if he thinks that he is acting unbecomingly and it's, it's obviously in this context where it's in a sexual sense. So "if anyone thinks he's not behaving well toward his betrothed, and if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes, let them marry, it is no sin."

So to not behave properly, to act unbecomingly, to act in some sexually inappropriate way, Paul is putting this onto the man's conscience and saying, you tell me. You tell me what's going on in your conscience before the Lord. If your conscience is bothering you, you need to take note of that. But the second part of the verse, there are basically two, this, this part of, if his passions are strong, that translation, they're basically two ways to translate this.

So in the ESV, which I think many of you have, it's translated, "If his passions are strong," and that's referring to the man, his passions. Other translations refer to the woman's condition. So the CSB, "If she is past marriageable age." The NAS, "If she should be full of age." The NET, "If she is past the bloom of youth." Or King James version, "If she is past the flower of her age."

So which one is correct? Both translations, I will tell you are accurate. The meaning of the adjective, *hyperakmos*, changes depending on which gender it modifies. So if it's modifying a

woman, it's the flower of youth idea. If it's modifying the man, it's the passions idea.

If it modifies a woman, it's referring to the end of her reproductive capability. It's she's passed the flower youth, she's getting on in years. So is that the idea here? Or, if we assume the fiancé in question is an older woman, yes, that would be possible to see it that way. But when the adjective *hyperakmos* modifies a man, the word means to having aroused passions.

So there is no gender in the verb here, translation really can go either way. So we are left with what's in the immediate context, which over and over again in here is talking about the man. I believe in this particular case, the ESV translation that we have is doing a better job than those other ones.

I think the NIV actually has a very clear translation of this verse, here's what it says. "If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged

to, and if his passions are too strong and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He's not sinning. They should get married." I think that is a very accurate and plain translation.

Paul, even though he acknowledges that, verse 36, the best plan, he says, what he's saying to this man. I think the best plan is for you to wait until the social unrest dies down. Until life returns to normal and that will require of you, questioner in verse 25, that will require of you, a bit of self-control. That will require the godly discipline of waiting. Waiting, verse 37. "The man who is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity, but having his desire under control and has determined this in his heart to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well."

Building a marriage is hard, but it's even harder in times of severe distress and trouble. So Paul is saying, wait, let the trouble pass over. That's the best route that's going to set you up for the best success of building a life together. But if you lack self-control, back to verse 36 and what I said there, go

ahead and get married, you're not sinning, even if that's not the best.

Self-control is a huge theme in this chapter. It's obviously a huge theme throughout Paul's teaching all through the New Testament, but in this chapter, look back at verse 5, husbands and wives should not deprive one another of conjugal rights, why? Verse 5, so that Satan may not tempt you because, why, of your lack of self-control. Your self-control issues don't end with marriage.

Okay, single people. Once you get married you still have different areas of self-control. We all need to fight for self-control, self-discipline. The verse 5, self-control in the marriage relationship. Verse 9 to the married, unmarried and the widows, those who've been married before Paul says, "If they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it's better to marry than to burn with passion."

So for those who've been married before, those who may be divorced, maybe those who are widowed, if they are legitimately able, biblically able to get married, they're allowed to get remarried, well, Paul says, I think it's better that they stay unmarried, but "If they can't exercise self-control they should marry. It's better to marry than to burn with passion." And by the way, also better than to sin.

He wants to keep, that's, that's the issue in self-control. That's the issue and all this council is, the primary thing I want you to get, he says I don't want you to sin. I don't want you to commit sin. Interesting that phrase or that sentence there. "It's better to marry than to burn with passion." You often hear, don't you. Those who've never been married to anyone before? They quote that last sentence as if it applies to themselves as if it justifies their demands, I need a wife right now, and they point to that verse. Paul's not addressing those who haven't been married before. He's addressing those who have been married before. This is for the unmarried, the, maybe those who were divorced. This is for the widows. It's not for those who've never been married before.

The, the struggle for sexual purity and self-control in, in sexual issues can be difficult. Certainly difficult in Corinth. The place was immersed, immersed in pornography, all the things you might think of. Immersed in sexual immorality, they had a temple where there were temple prostitutes, cult prostitutes, male and female, that people visited and frequented. You can even see it show up in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and 1 Corinthians Chapter 5. There's sexual immorality going on in the church it's a vile place, Corinth. Greco-Roman world was filled with sexual immorality. This is very, very much like our culture now.

So struggle for sexual purity in, in a culture saturated with sexual immorality, can be a difficult, difficult thing, but Paul is acknowledging that there's even a greater difficulty for those who've already experienced sexual intimacy. Like those who are the, what he calls the unmarried and the widows. He acknowledges it's more difficult for them because they've experienced it, so for them the battle to practice self-control can be more intense.

Which is why it is exceedingly foolish, not to mention sinful, to flirt with sexual temptation. If you're unmarried, however, were married, but if you're especially if you're unmarried, you don't have to be married these days to experience sexual intimacy. People commit fornication all the time. People could look at pornography all the time. So it is, it is foolish and sinful to flirt with temptation. It's like a child playing with fire. It's like a child sticking a fork into an electric socket. It is going to, it is going to do you great, great harm. So foolish to give in to sexual temptation. To engage in any kind of sexual sin in any form, whether virtual or actual, whether on a screen or in person. It doesn't matter. It is absolutely foolish. You will regret that for the rest of your life.

The world tells those who've never been married, go get sexual experience before, before you marry. Go get sexual experience so that you'll be practiced up when you get married. That's the idea. It's so stupid, so stupid to excite the sexual desires to provoke the passions that God intends for one man to have for one woman. Intends for one woman to have for one man. To play around with that before you're married and in that

covenant is like lighting a match to the hormonal fuel of the body and setting the whole thing on fire.

And when that fire burns it burns images and sensations into the memory. Takes a long, long time to uproot those and erase those, but by God's grace it does happen with sanctification. But still, don't put it there. You have a choice to make. God's counsel, contrary to the world, obviously, but God's counsel to everyone, especially those who are not married, sound counsel for everybody who's trying to prepare get themselves prepared and ready for marriage. Practice self-control. Practice self-control.

Listen to this from, you can write this down, 1 Thessalonians 4:4-7, "Let each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the gentiles, who do not know God. Let no one transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things. As we told you beforehand, and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us to impurity, but in holiness."

Holiness, self-discipline, self-control, these are the building blocks to setting a foundation, a good foundation for your married life and for the entirety of the Christian life as well. Learning to practice self-control, learning to say no to your impulses. All your desires, longings, to put them in, check just to deny yourself of something you're allowed to have anyway. Walk by that donut in the office. Just say no. Just say no, just walk right by it. You see that pastry, ladies, just, just walk right by. Say, I've, I'm going to have control over my own body and I'm going to tell, my senses, my desires, no, I'm in charge, not you. That's how it goes.

Even those things that are legitimate God given desires. Legitimate God given desires, if you are willing to sin to get them, or you will sin if you don't get them, well that's when legitimate God given desires can turn into sin. So put guardrails around legitimate God given desires, especially in the realm of sexual propriety. The practice of godly discipline and self-control, it lays a foundation not just for sexual purity, but for the entire Christian life, and it prepares us to enjoy God's very best, God's very best.

According to verse 38, in view of the social unrest and danger, "the one who marries his betrothed does well, but the one who refrains from marriage, he'll do even better." So the difference is between one who does well, and then one who does even better. So much of the Christian life is not about the choice between right and wrong, good and evil, bad and good, righteous, unrighteous. Those are simple binary matters that our bibles, aided by our, the law of God in our hearts, and informed by all of nature, supported by our consciences, making those kinds of choices between the black and white issues are so, so easy.

But what the betrothed Christian, the betrothed Corinthian is asking about, and what so much of decision making in the Christian life is really about, it's about the choices between good, better, and best. It's why settle for the good? Why settle even for the better when God's very best is available to you? Those who practice self-control, especially in the realm of permissible things like this, whether to marry now or wait till later, this is to train your heart for future discernment. It's

to make a distinction between the good, better and the best.
That is, that is the stuff of wisdom there.

Here's what the, you may have, be familiar with this text in Hebrews, but Hebrews chapter 5, verse 11, there are certain sections of Hebrews where there's some rebukes to the Hebrew Christians, the Hebrew congregation. And the writer says this about this, "We have much to say, and it's hard to explain since you become dull of hearing. Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment, trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity." I'll stop there. That's what we're to be doing. We're to be practicing discipline, self-control so that we can discern good from evil, and then also discern good, better, and best and make wise decisions.

Now that's the betrothed. Let me come back to first Corinthians 7 and just finish up the chapter since we're at it and talk about the widows and then we'll come back to draw out some implications in the final verses of the chapter, versus 39 to 40, Paul returns to address the widows. Same principles are in play here. It says, "A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she's free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. Yet in my judgment, she is happier if she remains as she is." Again, Paul had experienced both conditions. The life of a married man and of an unmarried single man, and he acknowledges their freedom to remarry.

Death breaks the bond of marriage, which means there is a freedom to remarry, but he nevertheless encourages the unmarried and the widow to just stay as they are. Stay single, she's happier if she remains as she is and she doesn't get married.

So the only exception, go back to verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 7, is if a widow is unable to exercise self-control, so he said in verse 8, "It's good for the unmarried and the widows to remain single as I am. But if they can't exercise self-control,

they should remarry. It's better to marry than to burn with passion."

This is consistent also with Paul's instructions to Timothy about ministering to widows, 1 Timothy 5:11. He says to Timothy, "Refuse to enroll younger widows," he means enroll them on the support list of the church. So, "refuse to enroll them for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry, and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith," that is their former commitment. Besides that, "they learn to be idlers going about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busy bodies saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander." Again pointing them back to the institution of marriage, for that shaping, constraining, using all their energy for, instead of evil, but for good now, and in raising, managing households bearing children, raising children and all the rest.

Paul would rather have unmarried and widows remain unmarried, but he, he's a pastor. He sees, he sees the

difficulty in some people in their maturity level in Christ and sees there are differences in people's ability to exercise self-control. So he makes provision for the strength of that marriage impulse which goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Remember compelled by desire to marry a wife, "a man shall leave his father and mother hold fast to his wife. They should become one flesh." He's going to be driven to marriage. Also, the woman even after the fall, her desire shall be for her husband, so they're still compelled to come together, and yet, verse 40, "in my judgment, she's happier if she remains as she is. And I, too, I think that I too have the Spirit of God." In other words, Paul's saying, I'm not just throwing my opinion around here for you to take or leave it. What I'm saying comes by way of divine revelation. So pay heed, pay heed.

So let me wrap this up. All unmarried Christians are indispensable. There's no first tier, second tier, third tier Christian, whether married or unmarried, all are vital members of the body of Christ. Some unmarried Christians are intentional. They make the most of whatever situation God has given them. They see it as a gift. And then some unmarried Christians are eligible for marriage, but Paul doesn't advise

marriage for all who are eligible, for the unmarried, the widows, he's decidedly in favor of them staying single, abstaining from marriage. Still, he'd prefer they give up what he thinks would benefit them most so they can avoid sinning because of a lack of self-control. So staying away from sin that is the most essential concern on his mind.

For those who've never been married, Paul doesn't discourage them from marriage, but all would do well to consider verse 35 carefully. "I say this for your own benefit not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and secure your undivided devotion to the Lord." Again, what Jesus said to his disciples, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given." So both marriage and singleness, both are good gifts from a good and wise God, okay?

I would like now to address some questions that may be raised in the minds of those who've never been married, but would like to be married. If you want to make this another outline point, certainly not necessary, because I'm going to go through a bunch of questions and I'll give answers to them. And

then we'll take some questions from you, but for those of you who are kind of like me, want to keep your sermon notes nice and tidy, you can make this point number four. We've got unmarried folks who are indispensable, intentional, eligible, and let's add some unmarried Christians are quizzical, quizzical.

When I say quizzical, I mean that in its fullest semantic range there are those who are curious, questioning, always inquiring, and then some who have fall into the category of quizzical, of being perplexed and baffled and bewildered. Still others even further from that they're skeptical and hopefully they don't fall into the pattern of being cynical. But all of you quizzical unmarried Christians out there, this final point is for you, and I'm just going to pose these like I said as questions, one, two, three, four, and so on, and then answer them.

OK, let's start with this one, question number one. What should I look for in a spouse? That seems to be when I talk to people who are unmarried, single, want to get married: What do I look for? That's a good question. Start with what Paul told the

widow, released from the bond of marriage because of the death of her husband. What do you say she's free to be remarried, right? But only in the Lord. If she wishes to do that only in the Lord. So when considering someone for a spouse, look for a Christian and I would say look for a true Christian, like a real Christian.

Lots and lots of false Christians out there. So you gotta be on your guard. And when you find that special someone, when you see that person from a distance and the heavens open, and God says to you, this is the one my son. This is the one. Definitely turn and run because God doesn't speak to you that way. Didn't come from the Bible. But when you find that special someone. You see them from a distance and you kind of, admiring and observing and things like that, avoid becoming romantically entangled right away.

Okay, when your, when your feelings get ahead of your intellect, calling for blindness of sound judgment, that's exactly what happens with your feelings and your emotions and your hormones and all that just gives you, puts blinding,

blinding on your intellect. So if you can watch that person for a while, from a, from a distance, see how he or she conducts himself with others. What matters to him? What kind of conversation she initiates? What kind of conversation she generates? See the kind of people that are attracted to her or repelled by her, or him.

If you think you've got a ringer after some observation, get some counsel. Pure council can be helpful. Your peers, your friends will tell you things you may not be seeing, they love you too. They, they wanna help you avoid a train wreck. But older, wiser counsel will see from a disinterested vantage point. They don't have any interest in the outcome except for your good. When they know you they love you. So involve parents for sure if they're available, but involve mature saints who aren't related to you as well, who are in your local church and close to the situation. Keep them involved along the process. When you're closer to marriage, certainly involve elders, and get some premarital counseling.

But if you've got a Christian, and I mean a true Christian, and see if this Christian, as you observe, see if this Christian is on a trajectory toward maturity and godliness, and Christ likeness. Does this Christian, this professing Christian, seem like that's what he is about, that's what she's about or are they interested in all kinds of worldly things? See what the trajectory looks like.

See if this person seems teachable, seems humble and willing to learn, eager to learn. Does he or she fear the Lord? Is she willing to confront you even, if it means letting you go if necessary, so she can please the Lord and truly be loving to you? Do you have that kind of a person in your life? But beyond that, true Christianity, Godly trajectory, just look for someone you enjoy, someone you like to be with, someone you, you can imagine spending a lifetime with that person, even though you can't see the future. You can see waking up to, next to that person, and being happy about that. You can see spending time with them. Realize though, that when you're dating you are only scratching the surface. You have really no idea what the future holds. So get out those dashes and roll it. No, I'm just

kidding. It's not what you're doing. We trust the Lord. We have the Spirit guiding us.

Question number two, question number two, Paul talked about a man who was not behaving, may not behaving properly toward his fiancé. So how should single men and single women interact? So that they're appropriate with one another, Godly in their dealings with one another? What we can start with 1 Timothy 5:1 and 2. Just jot that down, but Paul tells Timothy there how to treat different people. He says, "Encourage older men as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger women as sisters," and then all of this, "in all purity."

Okay, so it's not just men treat younger women as sisters and younger women don't have to worry about how they treat other people. Younger women, you also need to treat the men as brothers again in all purity. So treat one another as family members and in all purity. So men can guard your sister's purity in what you say, how you say it, how you act, how you look at them, how you refuse to look at them. Women guard the purity of

your brothers in what you say, how you say it, in what you wear and what you refuse to wear. Both of you be very careful not to heat things up by getting too intimate too fast.

Don't, don't, don't speed your way, there's two, basically there are two sides of a coin to, to intimacy. There's sexual intimacy, which is exclusive to marriage between one man, one woman, for life. There's also relational intimacy, and relational intimacy and sexual intimacy go hand in hand. One, feed, feeding the other, one encouraging the other in marriage. But obviously relational intimacy is something that we have varying levels of relational intimacy among one another. You have relational intimacy in a family, or in a church setting, or even in a workplace.

But sometimes Christians, young single Christians, are unaware how quickly they are speeding their way, saying I've got to avoid all sexual impurity and intimacy, but I can go for depth in relational intimacy. And they just start spilling everything out. Man, be on your guard against that. When I say man, I mean generally men and women, be on your guard against

that. Don't go too fast. Be very careful to fit the level of communication to the appropriate medium of communication.

So I'm talking especially about phone usage, texting, instant message technology, all that stuff. The tools we have and the tools we use, they have the power to shape us. Watch that your tools are not shaping you and designing you after their designer. Guard against the inappropriate use of technology. The more intimate the conversation, the more unfitting that is for texting, and messaging, and any other electronic medium.

Face to face provides a restraint in a social setting where you guard your words and you guard what you say well because you're watching a face and body language and all the rest. You're going to be on your guard. So again, by slowing down a bit, not letting your feelings push you into a romantic relationship, you give yourself and the other person time to think. You're less affected by romantic feelings and all these confusing emotions, so just hold back a bit. Observe that person in a mixed group and if you still think you'd like to move ahead

romantically, go to older, wiser Christians and get some good counsel, okay?

The third question, question number three. What if he isn't a mature leader? Should I go forward? If he's not a mature leader, should I even, should I even consider this guy? On the other hand: What if she doesn't seem interested in submitting to me? I mean, we're off on the wrong foot right away, aren't we? What about those questions? We'll start with you, men. Men, if you think she's not submissive enough to become your wife, just remember she's not a wife yet. She's not your wife. So she's under no obligation at this point in your relationship to submit to you. That'll grow the closer you come together. Those, you'll start to settle into those roles, the more it becomes clear. You're moving toward a covenant of marriage. But, just she's not under any obligation to submit to you. She's not your wife yet.

So make sure, in her, what you may interpret it as a lack of submission, or a disinterest in, er, I say, uninterested in following your lead and all that stuff. Maybe she's just being cautious and careful as she considers do I want to line up with

this guy? Do I want to line up under his authority? If you have questions about her and you should have questions about her, about her submission, about her teachability, and all that, watch how she relates to her parents. Watch how she relates to those in authority in the church or in the world of the workplace or whatever.

Remember, God, dezi, designed her by creation to be a help meet so it's all there. It's all in her. If she's a true Christian on that trajectory toward God fearing, Christ likeness, listen, once she accepts that title wife, makes that vow before God and before others, she's going to learn to pursue obedience to Christ. Don't you worry about that? You leave that to the Lord, in between her and the Lord.

Woman, same thing for you. Women, same thing for you if you think a man is not a mature enough leader for you to marry. He's got a lot to learn about leadership. You are right about that. That's absolutely true. He's got a lot to learn. Be careful though, that you don't disqualify him too quickly just because he's not the perfect blend of your father and John MacArthur,

okay? Just, there, there isn't any young man out there like that. This young man, he's got to grow. He's got to grow into his leadership. He's got to grow into his maturity. You got to give him time. He just needs instruction and practice and time to exercise leadership.

Again, God created him to lead. All the stuff of leadership is in the design already. It's all baked into the cake. He's a leader in embryo, just waiting to take up that title, waiting to take up that role and once he covenants with you before God, you watch his leadership mature over the years and the decades to come. Be patient as he stubs his toe every now and again. In leadership, pray for him, support him, and just watch what God does. You'll find that you have been the perfect help meet to the perfect leader and God has joined you together.

Question number four: How important are looks in finding a spouse? Or should we look for the ugliest Godly person we can find? Maybe that's the answer. Liking the way another person looks is not an unimportant thing, but trust me, the world, the flesh, and the devil are having a heyday right now putting way

too much emphasis on external factors. Things like beauty, body shape, body type, all the rest. God obviously, look around, God makes distinctions among us. He gives us different shapes and sizes and heights and all that stuff. He gives us a variety of external factors that make it interesting and diverse. Hair color, height, skin tone, all the rest. The variety is what glorifies God's creativity. We love it. We love the variety. It's how we have unique identifying characteristics that mean no two of us are exactly the same. It's incredible in God's creativity, in his design, that none of us are exactly the same.

And we do also find ourselves attracted to some characteristics and other people and not to others. That's individual, and it's not inherently sinful. But in a marriage, and we find this in all kinds of situations in life, and especially what you observe over time, we see this that the standards that are set by the fashion industry, or the entertainment industry, or whatever it is, they don't determine true beauty at all. How many of these fashionistas or these entertainment, you know, whatever they, whatever they call them, celebrities. Yeah, that's the word I was looking for.

And these entertainment celebrities are absolutely abhorrent. They could be the most beautiful looking person, but you know their life and you're like, that's, that's foul. There's, that's just, that persons like the devil incarnate. You don't want to have anything to do with that person, even if you could, they need Christ and they need their sin forgiven and sometimes when that sin is just, is just given opportunity with so much money it just, it just spills out all over the place.

So we know that intuitively, but we can sometimes fail, can't we? To think intentionally about that and particularly when it comes to thinking about a fitting spouse, and particularly when it comes to feelings erupting, and our preferences in looks and things like that start to take front and center place. So think about this with regard to looks. Men, handsome is as handsome does. Patience, kindness, tenderness, gentleness, when the fruits of the Spirit govern your life and define your character, your wife will find you stunningly handsome, even if you're not. Little secret: Conviction in leadership, knowledge of God's truth, wisdom, and decision making, those things generate the trust that a wife needs to follow in confidence, in feelings of security as she experiences

God's care for her through you. Man, if you excel in the things of the Lord, that wife is going to find you handsome, beautiful, lovely to her.

Women, same thing. Let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Adorn yourselves with dignity, wisdom, diligence in your work. And your husband will praise your character to his friends and to strangers. He'll be spent with your true beauty, I mean, ask any husband and wife, been married beyond 20-30 years, 40 years, 50 years. Do we look like we did in our 20s? No, but are we more attractive and appealing to one another after decades of marriage? Absolutely we are. Absolutely, it is such a joy, such a joy to see God shape that. That, that's why I say, you know, looks and, you know, physical attraction, and all that stuff, that will get you together initially. It's not unimportant, but man, it very quickly fades in importance. It fades with the outward beauty.

So question number five. How do I fight against worry or anxiety that I won't find a spouse that I will die lonely? How

do I fight against the temptation of thinking something's wrong with me? Remember, marriage is a gift. It's a gift which means you don't take it, earn it, merit it, it's a gift that you receive from God when he wants to give it to you.

Marriage isn't a status, you have a right to expect God to give to you. It's not a privilege that you demand. So if you're not married, that's because God hasn't chosen to give you that gift, at this time anyway. God might have chosen for your life that you never enter into a married state, and if that's the case he's given you the gift of being single, 1 Corinthians 7, right? The key is to wait patiently for him. Let him determine it.

Those who are, those who want to rush ahead and refuse to seek counsel, knowing that if they present this person to someone older in their life, that person, they're, the older person's going to say, get away, run from that and so they say, no, I'm not going to actually get any counsel. I know what I want. I know what I think. And so they rush ahead and they act like Samson who said, I saw one of the daughters of the

Philistines at Timna, now get her for me to be my wife. Yeah, you can force it. You can be as Samson and force it, but remember Samson lost his hair, lost his eyes, he's crushed in a big pile of rubble. Okay, if that's how you want to end up, that was a far better fate, wasn't it, than being married to wicked Delilah?

But for the godly who strive for holiness, just remember single person, if God can raise up sons of Abraham from the stones, he can certainly bring you a spouse. If you have a desire for marriage, don't worry, be encouraged by the demographics I cited this morning, seventy five percent of our church members are married, so it's a high probability God will give you that gift. He may not. And as I said, that's a gift as well.

If you have godly desires for marriage, sustain godly desires for marriage over time, think about Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord, he will give you the desires of your heart." God is your God. If your heart is fixed on worshipping and obeying him. If he's your delight, well then as he is your

delight and as his thoughts become your thoughts and his desires become your desires. Well then, guess what, your desires are his and he's delighted to give them to you. So keep on pursuing him.

And if you do keep on pursuing him and you are exercising self-control and disciplining yourself for the purpose of godliness and all the rest, you can probably assume, it's not a, it's not 100% guarantee, but you can assume God's put those desires there and you just need to wait and pray.

Get to know, get to know married couples, married couples love to play matchmaker. So get close to some families and say, Yeah, I was thinking I might like to get married. And do you know anybody, you know and let them go to work. If God has not introduced you to that special someone yet. Don't immediately think, I mean, if there's ungodliness in your life, yeah, point to yourself.

Okay, if you're if you're living an ungodly life, don't fool yourself into thinking, hey, I'm great stuff. But if you're

pursuing godliness in your life and God hasn't brought that special someone to you. Just know it's because that cake is still in the oven. It's not finished yet. Okay, God is still working on that person before he brings her or him to you and he, by the way, he is still working on you too. He's sanctifying both of you to make you fit for one another to bring you together at the proper time. So don't immediately let your head go to, there's something wrong with me.

Number, question number 6, and here's one for the married folks. What can we married folks do to encourage the unmarried folks in our church? I'd say that's a good question to ask the unmarried folks in our church. So have them over treat him to a meal or a dessert and have a conversation about it, but I can say this without any fear of contradiction, for many who are unmarried, loneliness is a constant companion. So make sure you practice hospitality with them. Don't, make sure you invite them over regularly. There may be occasions they don't accept the invitation here or there, but keep those invitations coming. Just let them know that you know them. You see them, you want their company and you love them. You want, let them know their company is appreciated and enjoyed by you in your home.

Also, let those who are unmarried serve you once in a while. Let them serve you. And you who are unmarried, go ahead and give it a try if you're a bit intimidated. Go ask someone who's really good at hospitality, does that well, ask them for advice. Maybe you can. You and a friend can host a couple or a family or even a big family. Believe me, big families seem intimidating to have over to your house, but I'm telling you they are often easier. Because big families, these moms know how to do things quickly, cheaply, fast, easily. They like all things easy. So you're set up for success and bringing a big family over. They will just love being with you. Alright, so married folks just befriend them, befriend them, get to know them and get into their lives and let them get into yours and, and see, see where, how God blesses that relationship.

Here's another question, question number 7. Does growing in contentment mean I no longer care about being married? Like if I'm content does it mean I'm indifferent to marriage. Is that what maturity looks like? I'd say no, not at all. Growing in contentment means that we learned to rejoice with our station in life. The circumstances God has put us in. We give thanks always

and for everything in the name of Christ. But there are still desires that we may have, unmet desires, unfulfilled desires that we just leave those in the hands of the Lord. We wait on him.

We wait on him to sustain us through all those unfulfilled desires, and we are going to, we're committed to waiting as long as he wants us to wait. We wait on his timing. We wait on the way he chooses to fulfill our desires. Here's how Peter describes that 1 Peter 5:6 and 7 He says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that in the proper time he may exalt you." And then this, "casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you." And take that to heart.

If you have unfulfilled desires for marriage and times going by, years are going by, and you say oh no. It's like that verb in first Corinthians 7. The flower of youth is fading for me. My clock is ticking and all that. Don't worry let that be a time to just turn your heart to prayer, knowing that he knows you, he cares for you. Take all that anxiety and cast it upon

him in prayer. He has the power, the omnipotence, the largeness to hold your anxiety for you. Just trust him and if he is not giving you a spouse and it's not coming, just know that whatever situation he has you in, that's the best for you right now. That's the best for you. Trust him in that.

Waiting means praying. Waiting means actively waiting, so being obedient to Christ within the waiting. Waiting means cultivating a heart of gratitude, cultivating a life of faithfulness in whatever circumstances God has given you, and then trusting God with the results. Trusting him. Okay?

Final question, question number eight. What should unmarried people do to serve in the church? And especially for the, for the unmarried women. Should unmarried women teach Titus 2 Bible studies training the young women to love their husbands and children? Or, what? Where do we fit in? With questions like this about where to serve and what to do with time and service and resource and all the rest and energy. When in doubt, ask a pastor, ask a deacon, ask an elder, ask a leader of a ministry team in the church.

All of us who are in leadership in some level in this church, we're like army recruiters. We're always scanning the church. We're on the hunt for those who want to volunteer for a ministry in a weak moment, and we'll take advantage of that weak moment in a heartbeat and put you to work. We are eager to have you serve and we have so many needs. Just because you see things are going swimmingly well and Monika's doing a great job over there and the children's wing and all the adult classes seem to be going well. The front lawn looks like it's been mowed. Don't think, oh there's nothing for me to do.

Men, there is a ton for you to do. We got men here who can put your, your skills, your talents, your strength to work. And women, same thing for you. There is so much to do here and some of you unmarried women who may, may be widowed or something like that, yeah, you may be teaching a Titus 2 class and teaching younger women to love their husbands and love their children and all the rest.

So, I'd also like to say try to grow in your skills of service and hospitality. Grow in your skills, sharpen them, strengthen them. Take the initiative as they say, find a need meet a need. Go looking for it. Don't just wait passively for someone to come to you. Go looking for where you can be involved. If you feel that you have a lack of resources for serving or showing hospitality don't even let that stop you. Your resources aren't the issue. You have time and energy to contribute, others can provide the resources, provide the environment for hosting or serving or whatever it is.

So just maybe you're not the type of person you can say, hey, I'm not the type person that's comfortable taking initiative. Well then go befriend someone who does have initiative and just tag along. You know, go become their partner or, or their, or their buddy in some kind of a service or ministry. Befriend friend someone who takes initiative. That person is not going to mind at all. They love bossing everybody around, telling everybody what to do anyway, so you'll be a good friend of them. Alright?



But get involved, sharpen your skills, service, hospitality, grow in whatever, however God's designed you to work within the local church. Go put it to the test. If you don't know what that is, go do something. If you're terrible at it, you'll be told, and maybe that's not the ministry for you. We'll just do the, do the redirection, we'll try this. If you feel like, I hate this, this is terrible and it's not bearing any fruit. We'll redirect you over here. I'm telling you, we will find some place for you to serve and to work. You've got a gift given to you by Christ for the service of the church.