

The Road to Marriage

I. Worldview

- We need to distinguish between:
 1. Biblical convictions. (In regular print below.)
 - These can be from the explicit teaching of Scripture, or from “good and necessary” (WCF 1.6) implications of Scripture.
 - To go against these would be to sin against God.
 - Example: we must marry within the faith (2 Cor 6:14)
 2. Biblically-informed wisdom. (In italics below.)
 - These are ideas that go with the grain of Scripture, but are not mandated by Scripture.
 - There could be more than one biblical way of living out the teaching of Scripture.
 - Example: avoiding long engagements. Not required, but definitely wise if possible.
 3. Personal preferences.
 - These are matters of indifference to Scripture, where personal opinion can legitimately vary widely.
 - Example: do you find a particular person attractive?
- Worldview is about developing both #1 and #2. Doing so on the topic of sexuality and gender is the goal of this course. But we want to keep them distinct so as to preserve liberty of conscience.

II. Choosing a spouse

- Believers must not be unequally yoked (2 Cor 6:14; i.e., not married to an unbeliever). But this does NOT mean divorcing an unbeliever is ok (1 Cor 7:13).
- *Unequal yoking may also occur with other important differences:*
 - *Theological convictions: problems will occur if spouses don't agree on things like Arminianism vs. Calvinism; principles of worship; who should be baptized; etc.*
 - *Lifestyle expectations (spending patterns; eating patterns); life goals (e.g., missions on a foreign field?); roles for husband and wife; number of children and patterns for raising them.*
 - *Lack of shared interests.*
 - *The wife is the helper of the husband (Gen 2:18). Does the woman want to help the man in his calling?*
- No remarriage if you or the other person has an unbiblical divorce (Matt 5:32).
- Character is absolutely vital: Prov 31.30: “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (see Prov 11:22).
 - *Is the Lord Jesus functionally at the center of their life?*
 - *Is this person humble and teachable? Evidence of repentance?*
 - *Are there key struggles with idolatry? YOU will inherit their struggles.*
 - *How do they treat their parents and other authority figures?*
 - *How do they handle conflict? Money?*
 - *It is going to take time to figure these things out!*
- *Physical attraction is secondary to character, but still important! (Prov 5:18-19; 1 Cor 7:3-4).*

- *The idea of “the One” is a dangerous idea that sows needless anxiety.*
- Remember: a godly spouse is a gift from God! (Prov 31:10; 18:22; 19:14)

III. Pursuing a spouse

- Love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:39). Is your treatment of the other person primarily about *you* feeling good? Are you complete in the Lord as a single person? (Prov 30:21–23)
- Knowing when to start: patience! Do not arouse or awaken love until it pleases (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). This is a POWERFUL force. Guard your heart. Do not rush intimacy. Do not play with other people’s hearts when you’re not actually interested!
 - Keep yourself from flirtation, from immodest and alluring dress (1 Tim 2:9).
 - *Guys: unless you are ready to get serious, do not lead girls on by singling them out.*
 - Prov 24:27: “Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.”
 - *Is it wise to be dating when you cannot see yourself getting married for years? Instead, enjoy being single and focused! (1 Cor 7:32–34)*
 - *It is wise to be dating when you do not have your life in order? We need to be faithful with what we have before adding more. (Matt 25:21; 1 Tim 3:5)*
- *Even when you’re ready, you don’t need to begin dating right away. Seek to get to know people in groups. You often can learn much more about their character!*
- *The purpose of dating/courtship is the formation of a family (Gen 2:24). Or, at least, discovering that someone is not right for you. It should be purposeful.*
 - An enduring marriage is a vital part of our witness (Eph 5:32). *You should seek to find out character issues now, not after the wedding.*
- God wants not even a hint of sexuality immorality (Eph 5:3; 1 Thess 4:3–8). Men should treat women as sisters in all purity (1 Tim 5:2).
 - *We need to be very careful about time spent alone, both because of temptation and because of our reputations (Prov 6:27; 1 Tim 2:10).*
 - *Immorality can take many forms (Matt 5:28: adultery in the heart). Beware of “emotional fornication.” Beware of idolizing the other person.*
 - Not defrauding your brother (1 Thess 4:6): if the person you are pursuing doesn’t end up as your spouse, have you taken something you shouldn’t from their future spouse (intimacy that needs to be kept for marriage)?
- The husband is spiritual leader and a picture of Christ’s sacrificial love (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23). In marriage, sons leave the home of origin (Gen 2:24); daughters are given by their parents (Exod 2:21; 1 Cor 7:38).
 - *Just as Christ pursues his church, the pattern is that the man lovingly pursues the woman, and the woman responds.*
 - *The man should assume the emotional risks, getting out on the branch and handing the woman the saw.*
- It’s a communal effort! Children, honor your parents (Exod 20:15): *seek their counsel and their blessing! Ladies, lean on your father’s wisdom and protection (Exod 22:17). Involve other people in helping you to make a wise choice (Prov 12:15; 15:22). Married people, provide good settings for young people to get to know each other.*