

CHALCEDON *Report*

No. 394, May 1998

Christian Courtship and Marriage— Guarding Our Children's Future

*Andrew Sandlin on
Covenant Faithfulness
or Covenant Love*

*Jim West on
the Danger of One-on-One
Recreational Relationships*

*Ingrid Dahl on
Courtship Versus Betrothal*

*Susan Burns on
When Happily Ever After Isn't*

Plus much, much more



*Man is a creature that in the long run has got to believe in order
to know, and to know in order to do.*

-Allen Tate

The Creed of Christian Reconstruction

Rev. Andrew Sandlin
[May be Freely Reproduced]

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Calvinist**. He holds to historic, orthodox, catholic Christianity and the great Reformed confessions. He believes God, not man, is the center of the universe—and beyond; God, not man, controls whatever comes to pass; God, not man, must be pleased and obeyed. He believes God saves sinners—He does not help them save themselves. A Christian Reconstructionist believes the Faith should apply to all of life, not just the “spiritual” side. It applies to art, education, technology, and politics no less than to church, prayer, evangelism, and Bible study.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Theonomist**. Theonomy means “God’s law.” A Christian Reconstructionist believes God’s law is found in the Bible. It has not been abolished as a standard of righteousness. It no longer accuses the Christian, since Christ bore its penalty on the cross for him. But the law is a statement of God’s righteous character. It cannot change any more than God can change. God’s law is used for three main purposes: First, to drive the sinner to trust in Christ alone, the only perfect law-keeper. Second, to provide a standard of obedience for the Christian, by which he may judge his progress in sanctification. And third, to maintain order in society, restraining and arresting civil evil.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Presuppositionalist**. He does not try to “prove” that God exists or that the Bible is true. He holds to the Faith because the Bible says so, not because he can “prove” it. He does not try to convince the unconverted that the gospel is true. They already know it is true when they hear it. They need repentance, not evidence. Of course, the Christian Reconstructionist believes there is evidence for the Faith—in fact there is nothing *but* evidence for the Faith. The problem for the unconverted, though, is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of submission. The Christian Reconstructionist begins and ends with the Bible. He does not defend “natural theology,” and other inventions designed to find some agreement with covenant-breaking, apostate mankind.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Postmillennialist**. He believes Christ will return to earth only after the Holy Spirit has empowered the church to advance Christ’s kingdom in time and history. He has faith that God’s purposes to bring all nations—though not every individual—in subjection to Christ cannot fail. The Christian Reconstructionist is not utopian. He does not believe the kingdom will advance quickly or painlessly. He knows that we enter the kingdom through much tribulation. He knows Christians are in the fight for the “long haul.” He believes the church may yet be in her infancy. But he believes the Faith will triumph. Under the power of the Spirit of God, it cannot *but* triumph.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Dominionist**. He takes seriously the Bible’s commands to the godly to take dominion in the earth. This is the goal of the gospel and the Great Commission. The Christian Reconstructionist believes the earth and all its fulness is the Lord’s—that every area dominated by sin must be “reconstructed” in terms of the Bible. This includes, first, the individual; second, the family; third, the church; and fourth, the wider society, including the state. The Christian Reconstructionist therefore believes fervently in Christian civilization. He firmly believes in the separation of church and state, but not the separation of the state—or anything else—from God. He is not a revolutionary; he does not believe in the militant, forced overthrow of human government. He has infinitely more powerful weapons than guns and bombs—he has the invincible Spirit of God, the infallible word of God, and the incomparable gospel of God, none of which can fail.

He presses the crown rights of the Lord Jesus Christ in every sphere, expecting eventual triumph.

CHALCEDON Report

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

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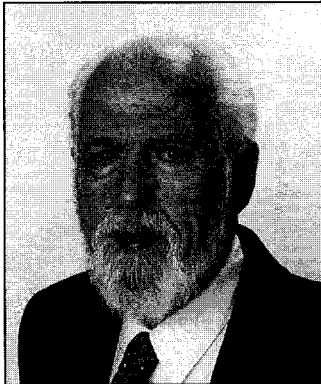
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Modernism Old and New, Part 2

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



Basic to all modernism is the Tempter's program as set forth in Genesis 3:5, man as his own god, deciding for himself as the ultimate knower, what is good and evil. Thus, man's original sin has become his religious, moral and philosophical premise. Man has made himself, as Van Til noted in *The*

Doctrine of Scripture, "the ultimate judge of what can or cannot be" (Cornelius Van Til, *The Doctrine of Scripture*, 13, The den Dulk Foundation, 1967). This means that man sees himself, especially since Kant, as the determiner of reality. As a result, it is not God who is the determiner of reality, but man. Calvinism, with its assertion of God's absolute priority in the creation and predestination of all things, is thus supplanted with Arminianism and humanism. Ultimate decisions are transferred from God to man.

The results are dramatic in their consequences. One woman, newly converted, decided against Arminianism when she realized what a ludicrous image of God it involved, *i.e.*, the Creator of all things sitting in heaven, biting his fingernails while waiting for some silly person to decide for or against Jesus! She recognized the moral repugnance and impossibility of such a view of God.

To deny God's priority in the determination of all things means that it is man who is creative and original in his thinking. This premise led Rilke to write:

What will you do, God, when I die?
When I, your pitcher, broken lie?
When I, your drink, go stale or dry?
I am your garb, the trade you ply,
You lose your meaning, losing me. (R. M.
Rilke, *Poems from the Book of Hours*, 81.
Narsdk, Conn, New Directions Press.)

Rilke's point was well taken. To deny God's sovereignty and his predestination of all things is to make man the lord and the determiner. The government of all things is then transferred to man, who must work to impose his mind on an ostensibly mindless world. The world is a realm of brute factuality, a random multiverse, and only man can create meaning and direction in this universal surd.

Modern Christianity, whether modernist or evangelical, is essentially centered on the individual, his experience, decision, or action, whether social or personal. It is essentially related to the Romantic movement with its priority on human experience and action. Within the evangelical community, this meant revivalism, with its emphasis on personal decision-making. Within the openly modernist churches, this has led to the social gospel and its stress on remaking the social order. This has usually meant political action, but not necessarily so. Now it is clearly true that conversion is necessary as the beginning of the Christian life, and equally true that faith will express itself in society. The emphasis, however, cannot be on the individual nor on society; both stresses are alike humanistic. Our Lord says plainly that priority must be given to the kingdom of God and to God's righteousness or justice (*Mt. 6:33*).

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better.*

We are so accustomed to giving humanistic concerns priority that it is difficult for us to imagine society as otherwise than it is, a man-centered world. Men want their humanism baptized, not supplanted. Christianization is supposed to make their fallen world more livable, not obsolete nor morally untenable. In this view, Christianity is seen as the *donum superadditum*, the extra topping on the dessert of life to make it even better.

This is the essence of modernism, to give priority to this world and especially man. The alternative is not asceticism nor a retreat from this world after the manner of the desert hermits, but its conquest and transformation by the regenerating power of Jesus Christ and his atonement, and the application of the Law-Word of God to every area of life and thought. To make this fallen world and its cultures prior to and determinative of God's kingdom and people is practical modernism.

Modernisms old and new try to adapt Christianity to this world's order and make it useful and usable for man, whereas a truly Christian faith summons us to remake our lives and our world in terms of the Triune God and his word.

Covenant Marriage Precedes Marital Love

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



The prophet Malachi (2:14) reminds us that marriage is a covenant bond. The notion in the modern Western world, by contrast, is that marriage is a “relationship.” The gaping chasm between these two views simply cannot be bridged.

The most obvious vagary of the modern view of marriage is that the marital bond is secured by “love,” love being defined romantically as emotional attachment and usually reduced to *Eros*, or sexual attraction. Nothing could be further from the Biblical teaching. The Bible does not command us to marry whom we love, but *to love whom we marry*. Marriage is first a covenant union in the sight of God and, ordinarily, the sight of human witnesses. It is a sacred, legal bond so uniting man and woman that they become, as it were, one flesh. This expression is to be understood covenantally, not sacramentally (as in Roman Catholicism, for example). Spouses’ lives are so intertwined they are to become, as it were, a single individual.

The Bible commands husbands to love their wives as Christ himself loved the church. This love should be so intense as to willingly sacrifice his own life for that of a wife (*Eph. 5:24-28*). The Bible also commands wives to love their husbands (*Tit. 2:4*). This marital love and intense affection that springs from a dedication to God and his Biblical requirements is the result of the covenant bond. The covenant bond is *not* the result of love; love is a normal result of the covenant bond.

The idea that young adults should get married as a result of “falling in love” is a hateful, perverse heresy. A godly young man, with the tender oversight of godly parents and pastors, should actively seek to court and to marry a godly young woman. When he finds such a woman willing to enter a covenant bond with him, and whose parents are so willing, he unites with her in marriage. Then he learns to love this precious, faithful, godly woman.

Recently my daughter interviewed me for a school project. She asked, “When you met Mom, was it love at first sight?”

“No, but it was *like* at first sight,” I replied. I knew she was a godly, virtuous young woman and I knew that she was just the sort of woman with whom I wanted to spend my life serving God, whom I wanted as mother to my

children, and who would assist me in the dominion task. I did not need to love her—and she did not need to love me—before we created a marital covenant. In fact, we should be suspicious of anyone who wants to get married because he assertedly has “fallen in love.” Likely his emotions or sexual attraction has clouded godly discernment. “Compatibility,” camaraderie, friendship, sexual attraction, and so forth are certainly factors that motivate an interest in making the marital covenant. The wife’s chief calling, however, the reason she was created by God in the first place, is to assist man in his specific sphere of dominion calling in the earth (*Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-22*). This is woman’s divinely appointed role. Therefore, it is *this* factor that prospective husbands should be looking for in a wife.

The covenant bond is not the result of love; love is a normal result of the covenant bond.

A great problem with the notion that “falling in love” is a legitimate justification for a marriage is that it leads to the wholly pernicious idea that “falling out of love” is a valid justification for divorce. This leads to a total inversion of the Biblical teaching. In the Bible, divorce is justified on the grounds of covenant breaking. In the modern world, it is justified on the grounds of the waning of love (“I can’t stay with her; I don’t love her any more”). Then, of course, there is the Christian Pharisaic stream: all divorce is forbidden. This, no less than the modern secular idea, is to assault the covenant. It is to say that one can default on the marriage covenant and never suffer the consequences. This, no less than the notion that the waning of love is justification for divorce, is evil.

Marriage is a lifelong, covenantal union. Inasmuch as it is patterned after the covenantal union of Christ and the church (*Eph. 5:25-29*), it represents the most intimate relation we mere mortals can enjoy in this life. It is the central human covenant bond that cements the family, the church, and the wider society, including the state.

Covenant Child-Rearing Versus Gnostic Humanism

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

In August, 1996, on a trip back from the airport, Rush reminded me of a telling and tragic fact about nineteenth- and twentieth-century Arminian revivalists epitomized by Billy Sunday and D. L. Moody: their children tended to deny the Faith, and in some cases committed their lives to external evil and debauchery. Rush noted that the nineteenth-century revivalists abhorred Calvinistic child-rearing practices and derided them with the contemptuous jingle, "Calvinist parents baptize, catechize, and chastise." The revivalists' twisted vision included the view that children of Christians should be intentionally *not* trained so that, when they had grown older, they could taste of the "true grace of God' as an adult."

This sentiment, of course, is blasphemy.

I then related to Rush that over the last several years I have received from revivalist Arminians "gospel tracts" or other intimations that I reside in an unregenerate state since I claim no Arminian "conversion experience" and since I startle the revivalists with the comment, "I never recall 'getting saved.'" The fact that I was trained in a godly family from my youth (*1 Sam. 12:2; Jer. 1:5; Lk. 1:15*) and assert with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (*2 Tim. 2:12*) only infuriates humanists in the church. For these enemies of the covenant, salvation is the work of man, not God. If man cannot claim credit for his "experience," they want nothing to do with it.

*They despise the faith of
children because the faith
of children highlights the
grace of God in salvation.*

These and other humanists hate God's grace, hate the covenant, hate the dominion commission. For them, God is the great and generous genie in the sky, waiting breathlessly to respond to man's every beck and call; in effect, they pervert the answer to the first question of the Shorter Catechism to, "God's chief end is to glorify man and enjoy him forever."

Salvation by Knowledge, Not by God

They are implicit Gnostics, since for these revivalistic Arminians, salvation is by knowledge. Strangely, though they are anti-intellectual to the core most of the time, they become almost pure rationalists in the matter of salvation, quite in distinction from Calvin, who has been seriously misrepresented along this line:

Over the centuries, Calvin has been accused of having intellectualized, legalized and doctrinized the Gospel to the point that the salvation of Christ became a formula, something held in the head rather than in the heart. This charge represents not only a gross oversimplification, but also a diversion from the real issue. The issue, certainly in North America, is not whether the Gospel is perceived by the head or by the heart, but whether the Gospel, however perceived, is an objective cosmic reality or a subjective knowledge (emotion) of the individual soul. On this question, Calvin is not in the least ambiguous. Everything for him rests on what God has accomplished in history. As to the individual's mode of grasping the event, Calvin is indifferent. Nowhere does he indicate that an experience of conversion is necessary for salvation. The marks of salvation are the same as the marks defining the Church itself: doctrine, sacrament, and discipline. [Philip J. Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York, 1987), 102]

Because, however, the Arminian humanists deny God's monergistic work in salvation (*Eph. 1*), they insist on "subjective knowledge [read: emotion] of the individual soul." They must therefore invent the spurious classification "age of accountability" to justify their view that all those lacking full knowledge (like children and the mentally retarded) are automatically regenerate or "safe" from damnation, despite the fact that St. Paul posits only two classifications of men—those in Christ and those in Adam (*Rom. 5:12-21*). Because they hate the doctrine of covenantal representation and its correlate, imputation, they do not recognize that all not united to Christ by faith are dead in sins and headed for Hell. They deny that faith is a gift of God (despite *Eph. 2:8*), assert that children cannot exercise faith (despite *2 Tim. 3:15*, where "child" [*brephos*] signifies an infant, often unborn!), and thus posit a new spiritual classification of mankind.

Anti-Covenantal Gnostic Churches

They reshape their churches to conform to their false

doctrine, creating “junior churches” for the covenant children and “adult worship” for covenant adults, despite the fact that all covenant members are enjoined to worship unitedly (*Dt. 29:10-12; Ezra 10:1ff.; Ac. 2:38, 39; Heb. 10:25*). They deliberately sequester family members from the covenant community, forming “youth groups,” “golden agers,” “singles ministries,” “divorce recovery groups,” etc. They require of covenant children “adult” “conversion experiences,” despite the plain teaching of the Bible that adults must become as children to be converted, not vice versa (*Mt. 18:3*). They despise the faith of children because the faith of children highlights the grace of God in salvation. Since they stress man’s belief, man’s choice, man’s knowledge in salvation, they hold covenant children in contempt. In other words, on this point *they are implicit humanists*.

This is an epistemologically self-conscious anti-covenantal ecclesiology. It is calculated to war against the covenant.

God’s design includes the bloodline as the main sphere of his salvific purposes (*Gen. 17:7-14*). The Puritans declared, “God casts the lines of election in the loins of godly parents”; and, as B. M. Palmer noted in 1876, “when the Church came to be more distinctly constituted, with enlarged promises and with new seals, in the days of Abraham, it was still founded in the house of the patriarch” (in *The Family in its Civil and Churchly Aspects*, Harrisonburg, VA, 1991 printing). This does not imply all children born to Christian parents are surely elect; God alone determines man’s salvation (*Eph. 1:4-6*). It does imply, however, that the great majority of Christian children are among the elect, and denotes that covenant children should be treated as elect unless they give visible evidence otherwise—that is, unless they begin to depart from the Faith. This is not presumptive regeneration, but presumptive *election*.

Why God Unites a Man and Woman in Marriage

Biblically, the production of children is one of the principal reasons God unites a man and woman in the marriage covenant (*Mal. 2:14, 15*). The covenant seed is granted parents for the express purpose of glorifying God by crushing his enemies and extending dominion in the earth (*Dt. 4:37, 38; 11:8, 9; 2 Chr. 20:7; Ps. 127:3, 4*). To

Christians, children constitute the covenant seed (*Gen. 17:7 f.*), the main implement in God’s hands to subvert Satan’s kingdom and Christianize the world (*Gal. 3:29; cf. Rom. 4:13*). We Christian covenantalists train our seed to be godly dominionists, that the earth is the Lord’s (*1 Cor. 10:26, 28*), and that we and they are his vicegerents (*2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

The majority of evangelical youth have no discernibly different views on obedience and morality than their obviously unconverted counterparts in the world.

The Culmination of Gnostic Humanism

The culmination of the Gnostic humanists in the church is impotence and death. They intentionally sever their seed from the signs and the seals of the covenant, and for 5-10 years train that seed to be pagan (while I dissent from the Baptist view of baptism, I nonetheless applaud all Baptists who train their seed in the Faith, and much prefer them to the inconsistent paedobaptists who are confident that baptism alone secures a faithful covenant seed). Not surprisingly, then, according to a recent statistic cited by a leading evangelical, the majority of evangelical youth have no discernibly different views on obedience and morality than their obviously unconverted counterparts in the world.

We reap what we sow. Gnostic humanists have sown paganism in their seed; is it any wonder when they reap the pagan whirlwind? By contrast, covenantalists train godly dominionists.

The future belongs to covenant parents and their children. The covenant seed will inherit the earth (*Ps. 37:28* and *passim*).

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Meet Our Underwriters!

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony, President, Chalcedon Foundation



Do you ever wonder how Chalcedon is funded? Chalcedon operates on a modest budget made possible when our readers use the little envelope we enclose in each magazine.

As you can imagine, donations may fluctuate widely from month to month, making long-term

planning virtually impossible. That's where our underwriters come in. By pledging \$25.00 or more every month, this "Gideon's Band" of 300 underwrites our core functions—allowing us to plan ahead without lurching from crisis to crisis. *Our underwriters are small in number but huge in heart and impact!* They provide the foundation for all we build on.

Why do people decide to underwrite Chalcedon's work? We recently asked our underwriters that question and thought you'd be interested in their responses. Can you detect any common themes?

Douglas and Carrol Canning: "The Underwriters Program captures the essence of Chalcedon's ministry: long-term sustained giving which in turn enables the long-term sustained growth and development of the Kingdom of Christ in every area of life. It is tremendously encouraging to see God using Chalcedon's Underwriters as the building blocks for restoring Christian civilization into the next millennium and beyond!"



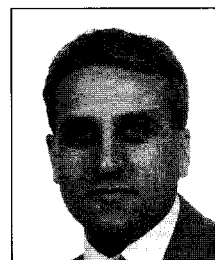
Dennis Clarys: "What you and others write about is God's truth."



Doug and Maureen Dahl: "Serving as underwriters for Chalcedon gives us a special tie to the organization, its work, and its

people. The new monographs serve as excellent introductions to the tenets of Christian Reconstruction. They've enabled us to present the truth of God's plan for victory to many friends and acquaintances who have previously heard nothing but the sensationalistic fantasies of self-proclaimed 'end-times prophecy experts.' We think of it as a secondary form of 'snatching brands from the fire.' We look forward to participating in another challenging and rewarding year with Chalcedon. It is our great joy to co-labor with you, even in this modest way."

Robert and Kristina Dahlin: "I guess Dr. Rushdoony's view of the law's being applicable to all areas of life is what convinced me and changed everything in my life: How I raise my family, how I love my wife, how I worship God, how I teach my children, my relationship with others, etc. God used you as the means to lead us down the road to the Reformed Faith: we had no church within 100 miles of our home to teach us the true, Biblical faith. Dr. Rushdoony's teaching on postmillennialism and the dominion mandate has given us a greater vision and more courage as we look at the job ahead of us in bringing all things under subjection to Christ. Finally, the reason we underwrite the *Chalcedon Report* is because the *Report* was sent to us for 7 or 8 years faithfully when we gave nothing in return. Now, understanding the value and being able to give a little, we rejoice to share what little we can with you. It was the *Chalcedon Report's* teaching on the separation of governments that led us to the conviction to get my severely mentally handicapped father out of a state mental institution after 10 years, realizing the job of caring for our family does not belong to the state. He now is very happy to live here with us on our farm, with his twelve grandchildren around him (and another on the way)."



Giuseppe DiTrapani: "I am delighted to express my heartfelt gratitude for the Chalcedon ministry. Delighted because I've been so illuminated (just look at all the darkness around). The expression of my faith is the strength of my life.

And the gratitude in my heart is the drive of my inexhaustive energy. *I support Chalcedon because it supports me.*"

Justin and Melanie Dock: "Chalcedon is the main source of information pertaining to the rule of God in all areas of life. We found—no exaggeration—complete, total, satisfaction in understanding of God's Word as espoused by Chalcedon. Lightning bolt! *There is now purpose and meaning in every single thing we do.* God by His grace chose to reveal that to us by Chalcedon!"



Bernard and Helen Duskin: "We have known Rev. Rushdoony for many years going back to the times when he would speak to us at a Christian school when our children were students there. He helped to mold our

understanding of Christianity. We received the guidance that provided a firm foundation of history and theology, not man's logic. By this we were set on a course of understanding what God is really doing in the world which gives us the confidence that righteousness does not only exalt a nation, but also our lives. Through this theology *we are able to realize joy and peace in a world that some others think has gone mad.*"

Dr. Nicholas and Janie Edwards: "What comes out of Chalcedon is real food from the Word of God. Knowing that God's Word is true has been established in my heart firmly and forever by the Holy Spirit and materials from Chalcedon."



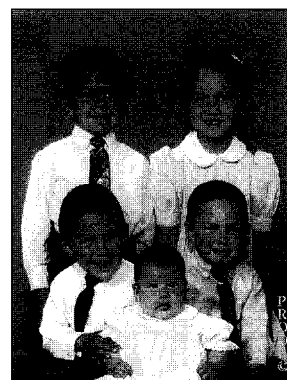
David and Iris Guild: "*Our main opportunity for an effective outreach of the Gospel is through support of the worldwide ministry that you are accomplishing at Chalcedon.* The first part of our tithe is sent to the Chalcedon Foundation because we know it will be used for the furtherance of the Gospel and for the glory of the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. We know the Lord of all grace has blessed your work (*i.e.*, Zambia, orphans, distribution of the *Report*, conferences, book publishing, etc.) and we trust He will continue to do so through the faithful declaration of the truth and principles of God's Word for every area of life. We appreciate the dedication and hard work for the cause of Christ that you and your staff are constantly doing."

Dorothy Hatfield: "I am thankful and grateful for all the great work Chalcedon is doing. So often we pray the Lord's Prayer and advance of the 'Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will Be Done On Earth' petition. It is certainly being furthered through Chalcedon's leadership and efforts. *A good foundation for a new Christian civilization is being made.*"



LaVerne and Frances Hill: "After reading many books from Dr. Rushdoony and others, we are more convinced that Chalcedon has real answers to the world's problems, and we want to be a part of it all."

Robert and Susan Hildebeitel: "We believe that as our family grows (home, church, etc.) we also are working in the foundational areas of a Christian society. As Underwriters of Chalcedon, you have supplied us with many tools with which to do our job. Thank God, we can be a part of your support, as we see Chalcedon as being central to the reformed nation and world that we expect our 'seed' to dwell in."



Eric and Ronda Holmberg: "As we find ourselves besieged by the enemies of Christ on every side, praise God for a ministry like Chalcedon that

boldly declares the only proper response for a follower of the Most High, "There's no place they can run from us now"! As more and more Christians repent of the heresy of premillennial 'dispensationalism' and take seriously the parting words of our resurrected Lord, Chalcedon's prophetic voice will become increasingly vital."

Dr. Herbert W. Hopper, Sr.: "Chalcedon is consistent in its exposition of God's Word and how His Word should be worked out in the lives of His followers — right here on this earth. Chalcedon is persistent in the ways that it adheres to the absolute sovereignty of God."

James M. Jarrell: "Christianity for me quickly became unrealistic and irrational. The intellectual absurdity presented to me in United Methodist Christianity drove me quickly to a humanistic attitude that placed me at the center of all my thinking. I left the church in my early teens. The efforts of Chalcedon, by the grace of God, finally proved to me that Christianity is much more than simple emotionalism and intellectual absurdity. Christianity is not irrational, but the only true basis of rationality. Consequently, reality must then be constructed in terms of a Biblical worldview. Christianity is not an impotent faith, but a life-changing force which will ultimately prevail in triumph. As an underwriter, I am honored that I can help further the efforts of such a noble and most importantly Godly cause. I applaud Chalcedon for standing strong on the triumphant faith of Jesus Christ in a world dominated by compromise and corruption."



Ruth Sawall: "Chalcedon material has given me insight into eschatology. It makes sense, gives me hope and enthusiasm in my faith. The more Chalcedon material I read and hear, the stronger my faith grows and the more excited I become. Chalcedon picked up where my church left off. Your material is the best. As we influence other Christians, the body of Christ will represent a force that will change history."

Jeffrey P. Sexton, Major, U. S. Army: "The ministry of Chalcedon is unique and supplies me with information and perspectives on Christianity and this world that I receive from no one else. I appreciate Chalcedon's articulation of a plan for Christian success in all areas of life. My Christian education has increased tremendously through reading Chalcedon works."

Dave and Susie Turnbaugh: "The reason Susie and I support the ministry of Chalcedon regularly is because it is the first Christian ministry that we became acquainted with that is laying a proper foundation for long-term Biblical reformation. The money that we give to Chalcedon does not go toward quick fixes for the problems of society; *but it will bear fruit in generations to come.*"

Gary Wagner Family: "We know the money is used in the best possible and most economical way to advance the Lordship of our King Christ Jesus. My love for Rush and

Chalcedon runs deep and I can think of no other ministry where my meager support could be put to a great cause!"



Anthony and Margaret Young: "In 1983 God sovereignly caused me and my wife to be present at a seminar in Sydney, Australia and to hear Dr. Rushdoony. From

that time on Chalcedon graciously posted the *Report* to us regularly. Through this, God has gradually but radically changed our thinking, from a limited evangelical view to a better understanding of the whole counsel of His Word and how it applies to all of life (we will ever be indebted to Chalcedon for this). We have much joy in being underwriters, it gives us the opportunity of being (by God's grace) a very small part of what He is doing in our generation towards His final and certain victory. It is a tremendous privilege!"

Roger and Rebecca Vrooman: "Where I am today in my faith I owe to R. J. Rushdoony and all of you who contribute to the *Chalcedon Report.*"

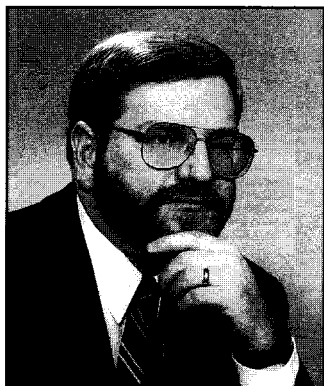
If, after reading these testimonials, displaying the team spirit, unity, purpose, sense of real participation in laying the foundation for the restoration of Christian civilization, you're interested in becoming an underwriter (and receiving a 40% discount on selected books, a special quarterly update on our progress as well as a few "surprises" throughout the year), just e-mail me or drop a note and ask for "Underwriters Information." You may think your five loaves and two fish are of little help, but our Lord can multiply your giving to help thousands. We pray that Underwriters will continue to grow as an instrument of blessing. As we have said for years on our thank-you letter, "Your giving establishes the limits of our work, humanly speaking."

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How To Help Your Children Find the Right Life Mate

By Rev. Brian M. Absbire



She was a gorgeous young thing named, believe it or not, “Barbie.” Her Dad was the skipper of an oil tanker, just back from a three-month trip. And I could tell right off that he wasn’t much impressed with the long-haired, bell-bottomed, leather-vest-wearing, “Pimples-R-Us” punk

who had been dating his daughter during his absence. In short, he wasn’t much impressed with ME! We were sitting in his basement, as he lovingly cleaned a beautiful double-barreled shotgun in preparation for the opening of pheasant season. At one point, after asking some basic questions about me, my family, school activities, educational and vocational goals, political views, current bank account, etc., he broke open the shotgun, looked at me down both barrels and said, in a friendly, conversational sort of way, “You know, Brian, my daughters are just about the most precious things in my life. If anyone was to ever hurt them, why, I don’t know what I’d do.” With that, he snapped the gun shut. The “click” was loud enough to shatter ear drums. And the message came through loud and clear. Not surprisingly, even though I had all the moral instincts of any “normal,” hormone-driven, sixteen year old, pagan boy (*i.e.*, none!), my relationship with that young woman was remarkably pure.

Sadly, most fathers do not seem as concerned with protecting their children during the most difficult time of their lives. Since the Industrial Revolution, the time between the onset of puberty and Christian marriage has significantly increased, forcing a period of prolonged abstinence during the very time when a young person’s sexual desires are at their peak. Added to the problem is that we live in a sexually saturated culture, where immorality and fornication are the norm. Yet most parents, even many Christian parents, simply turn a blind eye towards their adolescent children, allowing them to be placed in situations where their morality is severely put to the test by raging hormones. Too many parents totally abdicate any real responsibility of helping their children. Most do not carefully supervise whom their children

“date” (a nasty and destructive practice that the church has adopted almost without a whimper) and routinely allow young boys and girls to spend considerable amounts of time together, alone, away from chaperones. “But,” such parents say, “I raised my children right. I trust them!”

Yet even a rough survey of people my age (early forties) will disclose overwhelming evidence that such trust is misplaced. Any pastor can recount countless horror stories confessed by counseling cases of their disastrous experiences with members of the opposite sex during the years just before marriage. Again and again, when left essentially to their own resources, and the pervasive influence of what their culture defines as acceptable behavior, a significant number of Christians confess to immorality before they were married. Since so many Christians have allowed their values to be determined by a secularized and paganized society, rather than the Scriptures, is it any wonder that the church is so weak and impotent in the world, when we cannot even instill consistent, Biblical practices in our families?

When it comes to selecting a life’s partner, Christian parents are usually even more confused and often just as negligent. Most refuse to advise against possible mates of whom they disapprove since they fear losing whatever little influence they still have left with their children. Though choosing the person your child will marry is perhaps the most important decision you and they will ever make in this life, many parents are so scared of appearing controlling and manipulative that they will actually refuse to give their children counsel. “Whatever makes you happy, dear. . .” is not an uncommon response. Parents give a lot more time and thought to a child’s college education or sports activities, than with whom that child will spend the rest of his life!

When you think of it, that’s not all that surprising. First of all, the parents probably know little or nothing of the partner their child has picked out, or the family he comes from. In American Christian culture today, children are normally separated from their parents at a very young age. They then develop their core beliefs from popular culture, public schools and peers. From surveys done over the last 20 years in various ministries with which I have been involved (agreed, not necessary a scientific or representative sample of the population as a whole), most young people met their life partners at college, the military or in churches they joined AFTER they left home. (The running joke at the evangelical

Baptist college I attended was that the school offered two degrees, a BA for the boys, and a MRS for the girls). The prime ingredient of whether or not to marry was almost universally, "Because we're in love." Conspicuously absent from the vast majority of marriages was any significant parental involvement in the whole process. When it came to marriage, the parents' views were just not considered all that important.

Yet the Scriptures are very clear that marriage is a covenant. It involves children's transferring their allegiance from one covenant to another. That's why we have that little bit in the wedding ceremony that says, "Who gives this woman in marriage?" The father, by standing by his daughter, is formally transferring his covenant authority over her from his household to the groom's. The groom is leaving his father's household to set up a new one. There cannot be a transfer of covenant authority without at least the permission of the parents. Yet surely the responsibility goes beyond mere consent. Does it not also require the active participation of the parents in helping their children find suitable partners? Is not the glory of age the opportunity to learn from our mistakes and pass that wisdom on to the next generation? While we certainly cannot protect our children from every bad decision, surely we should be striving to help them make THIS decision based on the wisdom of God's law rather than the whims of transient feelings.

Therefore, godly parents need to consider practical ways they can guide their children. It is too late to wait until your kids are sixteen years old and already looking at all the pretty candy on display, before you lay down these basic principles. They need to become a part of your daily family worship at an early age. I feel deeply for the man with a 24-year-old daughter who comes to me in tears, bewailing the terrible choice of a husband she has picked out. He is caught between a rock and a hard place. If he refuses, she gets married anyway, and he loses his daughter. If he agrees, he gives his blessing to a marriage he hates. But the problem, my friend, is that the father should have been working with that young lady when she was 12, not 24. He has failed to transmit his core beliefs to his daughter. And now he reaps the reward by seeing his covenant seed marry a jerk! Therefore, the following principles and guidelines are offered to parents as they seek to help their children find the right life mate, before it is too late.

Right Focus (Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31)

First and foremost, we have got to instill in our children that in marriage, as well as every other area of life, our purpose is to glorify God, not to live "the American dream." To glorify God means to submit every area of life to his law and his will. We are not here to live for ourselves, but for God. Thus, if something we want is contrary to God's law, then we must die to ourselves (Lk. 9:23-24) and seek his will instead. This basic orientation will save our children much grief and

pain, for God's law is gracious and meant not only for his glory, but our good. Hence every decision they make, especially regarding marriage, ought to be made ultimately and finally as unto the Lord. While most people today make decisions about marriage based on the myth of romantic infatuation (I refuse to call it love), this is no Biblical basis for selecting a life partner. Even secular psychologists acknowledge that romantic infatuation is transitory, lasting at best six months. If a relationship has nothing else going for it than this, then that couple is going to find it very difficult to make that marriage work. We have got to warn our children about "love" and help them to guard their hearts.

Therefore, there may well be people who appear very attractive to our children, but a marriage with them would not be to God's glory. Obviously, those who reject the Faith are unsuitable as potential spouses. We are forbidden by Scripture from marrying unbelievers. But more than that, those who reject the Reformed Faith are also inappropriate partners. Arminianism and antinomianism are grievous errors and will undermine your covenant seed's future. Parents need to protect their children from them. From a young age, we ought to be training our children to have discernment about these kinds of things. Furthermore, we need to make sure they don't have the opportunity to come into contact with unsuitable marital prospects precisely where courting relationships develop. Sadly, economics, not theology, governs most parents' actions. They send their children to various schools so they can get a good job. Then they wonder what went wrong when their young'ns come home with some total flake they met in college. "But Daddy, he's a Christian!" Yeah, right.

Right People (Gen. 2:18)

The theology of finding appropriate partners for our children begins with God's actions for his children in the Garden of Eden. God specifically created a help for Adam that was suitable for him. They were not equals (God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve) but rather complements; *i.e.*, each possessed mutually affirming gifts, strengths and insights. Each was incomplete without the other. Each person had qualities that the other needed to fulfill his covenant duties before God.

Therefore, in the same way, though there may be many possible partners for our children, we should seek to use our superior wisdom to help them find mates that will complement their own unique personalities, abilities, gifts and callings. Young people, going through the most turbulent times of their lives, do not know themselves as well as they sometimes think they do. The average American will change careers repeatedly until age and economic necessity finally make him settle down. If the divorce rate is any indication, young people are no more ready to make a final decision on marriage than they are on vocation. They need their parents' input. Sadly, too many parents do not really know their children because

by the time that their kids become teenagers, they spend virtually no time with them. Someone else has educated them (the public schools), someone else has instructed them spiritually (Sunday school, youth group, traveling revivalists, “Christian” rock artists, etc.) and someone else has been their intimate confidant (friends, neighbors, peers, etc.).

But if parents have fulfilled their Biblical role faithfully, they should know their children better than anyone else in the world. They should have 20-odd years of experience with their children, know their moods, tempers, gifts, weaknesses. And hence they are providentially equipped to be in the best position to advise their children about what kind of person they should be courting. When a child reaches the age where courting is now appropriate, parents and child should sit down and do a frank analysis of both themselves and potential partners.

At a minimum, young men seeking our daughters need to demonstrate before courtship that they have a clear focus on their dominion calling. Adam was given a wife only after he had begun his work in the Garden. Once his calling was clear, then a suitable helpmeet was created for him. A man needs a wife who can come along side and work with him.

In the same way, young women are required by God to submit to their husbands. This has never been an easy role for godly women, not since the Garden. We have a responsibility to make sure that our sons have wives who understand their role, are comfortable in it, and will be supportive. Submission is too essential a requirement for godly women to entrust it to some slack-jawed yokel who will misuse it.

Take, for example, a young man who is by temperament rather shy and retiring. He’s a good boy, diligent and conscientious, but maybe not all that masterful. He may well be attracted to a strong, dominant type of woman. Would it be a sin for two such people to marry? Of course not. But I can guarantee that those kids are going to have problems. The husband is likely to be severely tempted to abdicate responsibility to his more forceful wife. She will have to strongly resist the temptation to rule over her husband. It’s not that such a marriage could not work, but that it is going to entail a considerable degree of time and trouble and heartache. By the parents’ carefully and realistically working with their kids to help analyze and evaluate themselves and others, they can avoid a great deal of grief.

Right Heart (Phil. 2:3-4)

The goal of any relationship is ministry, not manipulation. We are not to seek to have our own needs met, but rather to meet the needs of others. Yet usually marriages are made because young people think that a certain person will meet their “needs.” Instead, we must raise our children to see life as a process of giving up rights, and taking on responsibilities.

Therefore, our children need to learn how to be “other-oriented” in their thinking. Often Christian parents spoil their children by being over-indulgent, allowing their natural affection to determine how they discipline and train children for life. The Puritans actually made their children move out of the home during their teenage years because they feared that such natural affections would lead to the parents’ making bad life decisions for their kids! But today, we often require no responsibilities of our children, we buy them what they want, when they want it, subsidize their affluent, pleasure-oriented lifestyle, and then wonder why their marriages break up. Selfishness, pure and simple, is the cause of most marital disasters. People want their own way, because the parents have trained them to think that they are the center of the universe.

Today, we often require no responsibilities of our children, we buy them what they want, when they want it, subsidize their affluent, pleasure-oriented lifestyle, and then wonder why their marriages break up.

The beauty of Christian relationships is that because we are complete in Christ, because his grace and mercy have been granted to his elect, we can be and should be channels of that grace and love to others. Husbands must be willing to give themselves up for their wives. Wives must submit themselves to their husbands. Both man and woman make genuine sacrifices to make a godly marriage. If one or both of the people are not ready or able to make those sacrifices, then they are not suitable marriage partners.

Right Mind (Phil. 2:1-2)

As Christians, we are commanded to have the same mind, to be intent on one purpose, united in spirit. If this is to be true of the church, how much more so ought it to be the norm in the home! Therefore, life mates for our children should share the same life goals and desire a complementary ministry. This also has application to our interests, hobbies, desires, etc. The only way to know this is to spend time with people. One Sunday lunch with the family is simply not sufficient time to evaluate a person

properly. Hence, normally speaking, families ought to come together and do things as families. This allows young children to grow up together with people of a like mind.

Right Qualifications (*Eph. 5:22ff., Pr. 31:12ff., 1 Pet. 3:1ff., Tit. 1:6-9., 2:2ff., 1 Tim. 3:1ff.*)

The best indicator of future performance is past performance. If you want to know what a person is going to be like in the future, just take a long, hard look at where he has been. Now it is the grace and glory of the gospel that God transforms sinners. Yet even so, when deciding on who is or is not suitable as a mate for our children, the past is a great indicator of what they can expect down the road.

There is no ministry so important, no job so crucial, no life situation so desperate, that we must sacrifice our covenant seed on the altar of expediency.

Therefore, parents should look for potential husbands who possess headship and leadership ability. Does this boy know his calling and is he working diligently at it? Old Testament law required a man to pay a bride price roughly equivalent to three years' labor. Can the boy save and manage money and thus financially provide for the family (*1 Tim. 5:8*). Is he good father material (*Col. 3:19-20, Eph. 6:1-2*)? Look at his own father for insights as to how he will handle frustration, anger, fear, etc. Does the boy's father trust his wife, love her (*Eph. 5:21ff*), nurture and care for her (*Pr. 31:11*), granting her honor as a fellow heir (*1 Pet. 3:7*), understanding her and being gentle with her (*1 Pet. 3:7*)? The way the boy's father treats his mother is likely the same way he will treat your daughter. Is he a one-woman man (*1 Tim. 3:2*) or has he had a series of romantic entanglements? Is the boy sensible (*Tit. 2:6*) and does he possess the general godly character qualities of an elder (*1 Tim. 3:1-ff.*)? If not, then no matter how friendly, charming or attractive, look somewhere else.

In the same way, potential wives for our sons should be submissive in spirit (*Eph. 5:19*) and respectful in their attitude and demeanor. After marriage, they are to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, loving their husbands and children (*cf. Tit. 2:3*). They are able to do good to their husbands because they are industrious, charitable, skilled in their work, well-dressed (and modestly so), good managers of resources and, of course, they must fear God (*cf. 1 Tim. 2:9-10, 1 Pet. 3:3-4, Pr. 31:22*). If a woman lacks the qualities necessary for any of these before marriage, there is no way of knowing if she will ever develop them afterwards. Therefore, parents ought to make it a point to examine potential mates according to objective, Biblical criteria. If they don't meet the qualifications, then no matter how attractive they are, they are not suitable for marriage.

Conclusions

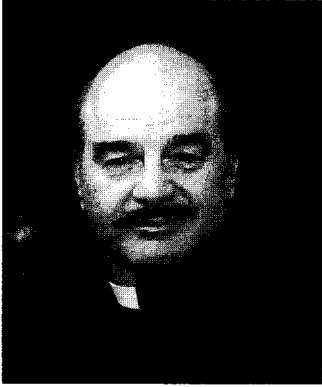
The person our children want to marry says a lot about what sort of Christian *we* are, about our values and priorities and about how faithfully we carried out our domestic responsibilities. Granted, even in the best families, there may be reprobate children who reject our wisdom, resist our authority and refuse our counsel. And they will bear in their own lives the pain and frustration of their rebellion. But that does not let parents off the hook. We must do our duty to love our kids, teach them, train them, and most importantly, be involved with them. There is no ministry so important, no job so crucial, no life situation so desperate, that we must sacrifice our covenant seed on the altar of expediency.

There are, of course, many more important things to consider in helping our children find an appropriate life partner. While it is true that despite the principles noted above, any two Christians can marry lawfully, some marriages will take far more time and effort to make work. In this day of emotionalism and lack of commitment to anything except one's personal peace and security, violating these standards will often mean a marriage full of trouble that will distract our children from the real work of the kingdom. The family is the beginning of dominion, not the end. A man at war within his own home has less time, energy and effort to work for the kingdom outside the home.

Understanding and applying these guidelines will result not only in a marriage pleasing to God, but also one that will be the most rewarding for ourselves. They provide the foundation for winning the world for Christ. Our children are our future, and the last best gift we can give to them is helping them find someone to lovingly co-labor with them for the kingdom.

The Fountain of True Love

By Rev. Ellsworth E. McIntyre



About ten years ago on a cruise to the Bahamas, our ship stopped at a place called Newport. My wife and I descended the gangplank for a tour of the island. We joined the silver-haired and the bald-headed on the dock, where we were stuffed into waiting taxi cabs. We ended up in an

ancient Cadillac limo that looked like it belonged in a 1940s funeral. The tour was a rip-off. There is virtually nothing to see in Newport. The driver pointed out sights such as, "There's our new Firestone Tire Store." (The tourists struggled to distinguish this store from a thousand other Firestone stores in the States.) We passed a gated community prohibited to us tourists. The guide said darkly that there used to be a lot of millionaires living here, but the politics of the island had frightened them. The rich fled to the Cayman Islands to benefit from better tax laws, the guide lamented.

Not Ashamed

After a lengthy stop at a botanical garden, we retraced our route back to the ship. The guide fell silent as the tour ended. So I struck up a conversation with the driver. I asked him if he owned the limo, and he good-naturedly replied that he was just a chauffeur. I asked him if he had a family. He said, "No, just myself and some pets." I introduced my wife sitting beside me and added that we had eight children. "Oh," the chauffeur replied, with a big smile spreading across his black face. "I have 12 children by seven different wives. I may not have a family, but I have been a daddy many times." He said it with such obvious pride and enthusiasm that all of the passengers (10 or 12 of us) looked nervous and shocked. Oddly, we were embarrassed that he was not ashamed of his behavior.

Deadbeat Dad

The taxi driver is what liberals would call a "deadbeat dad" and what R. J. Rushdoony calls "a man whose masculinity has been reduced to mere procreation." The sad fact crossed my mind that this driver had the same concept of fatherhood as a gang of dogs in an alley, pursuing a female in heat. How is a man reduced to this level, and

what is the cure for such a condition? Rushdoony tells us one way in which the family is destroyed: "The family is to all practical intent abolished whenever the state determines the education, vocation, religion, and the discipline of the child." He concludes this theme in writing, "The abandonment of a family-oriented education leads to the destruction of masculinity. . . ." The cure, then, is not more charity programs financed by either the church or the state to undermine or replace the obligations of the father. The cure is the application of God's law. As the father assumes control and responsibility for the education, vocation, religion and discipline of the child, he wins back his birthright of masculinity.

The reader may easily criticize an ignorant chauffeur, but the chauffeur has a terminal case of the same disease that eats like a cancer at the entire moral fabric of America. For example, in 1959, when I went to work in the office of a metal roof deck company in Pittsburgh, it was common for the men to gather over coffee or around the water fountain and study the lower halves of the women who passed in the hallway. Without a particle of shame, they boasted constantly about their acts of fornication and adultery, which they called "stud activities." Their attitude was not any different from the chauffeur's. It was an open secret that supervisors were having extramarital affairs with their secretaries, while maintaining a facade of a marriage at their homes. I recall that one man wisecracked to another, "Hey, Ted, I saw your wife at the Christmas party, and I must say you're chasing tail at the office that doesn't look as good as what you have at home." This was greeted by warm-hearted laughter all around.

Moral Suicide

Forty years later, I see the consequences of this destruction of the family and masculinity when single mothers bring their children to Grace Community Day Care and School. These victimized women are condemned to spend a lifetime caring for children by themselves. They grimly go to bed with a continuous string of irresponsible men. This moral suicide will most likely continue until they drop into a cursed grave.

Poisonous Gospel of Love

Occasionally some of these women will drift into the modern church, but there a theology will be given to them that has only a slight healing for the gaping wound that sucks life out of their family relations. These modern churches are ignoring the law of God that must be taught

and applied if it is to heal the family. These churches fail to teach the children how to live, whom to worship, and how to control their sex drives so that they will not repeat the mistakes of their parents. These churches have replaced the law with “love,” but their brand of love is stripped of all Biblical meaning. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” 1 John 5:1, 2 teach that love is keeping the Commandments and finding that law a blessing instead of a curse.

There can be no stemming of the hemorrhage that is draining the life from the family without the application of God’s law. It is a deadly illusion to suppose that one can know he is in grace without supernatural obedience to the law-word of God. Almost all of our modern churches and even some Reformed churches refuse to apply God’s law, but instead have substituted a poisonous gospel of love. As a direct result, our families are being abolished, our men are losing their masculinity, and our women mourn in the night on their pillows with no one to help.

Since the publication of my book, *How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education*, I have entertained dozens of families in Naples, many of them Reformed pastors. Many who read regularly the *Chalcedon Report* and call themselves Reformed have not read the *Institutes of Biblical Law*. As a result, many of these people will find out at the judgment seat of God that they have been part of the problem and not the solution as they so fondly suppose. “Many that be first shall be last and many that be last shall be first” (*Mk. 10:31*).

Permanent Wealth

Now let me get to the point of this article about families and the preservation of wealth. I am not off the subject, as you may suppose. The above problems must be corrected for the family to be reconstructed according to God’s law-word. God’s chain of command must be in place before wealth can be created. We must seek the dominion of Christ, and then we will obtain wealth (*Mt. 6:33*). Men blinded by sin vainly rush into the marketplace to try to get rich. They heap up what they can and place it in bags that have holes (*Hag. 1:6*). In other words, their wealth is fleeting or temporary. Such is the fate of all those who seek riches contrary to the law of God. It is not money that is the root of all evil; it is to love money more than the truth. Those who love the truth will find riches. They will find permanent wealth on the road of duty. Wealth is the unintended consequence of those who obey the covenant. Evil men may prosper temporarily, but ultimately they skate downward into darkness.

Solution: The Bible’s Dowry System

We have a problem of broken homes producing emasculated men who refuse to take responsibility for their own flesh and blood, and we have women sentenced to a lifetime of grinding poverty. The solution is to apply

the law-word of God. As a practical beginning, we need to recover the Bible’s dowry system and recognize no marriage as legitimate that does not have financial arrangements that agree with the Bible. (See *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 176f, 363f, and 417 for more on the dowry.) What is required is that the groom post at least 3 years’ wages as a surety for his marital covenant with the money used to benefit the innocent party and children in the event the covenant is broken. The groom must save or borrow the money. He can have a creditor post the money for him; but regardless of how he raises the money, he must demonstrate the character to save it or prove his creditworthiness to someone who would lend him the necessary dowry. This is not to say that the marriage is based on anything other than love, but it is a different kind of love that is backed up by demonstrated character and property. I suspect the divorce rate would plummet if every man faced a severe financial penalty for breaking his vows. I think every woman would be less likely to be seduced if she knew the result of the seduction was the loss of her dowry. The phrase “true love” would take on a different and concrete meaning. The dowry system allows for marriage based on affection, but never affection divorced from reality. In other words, the child can have a veto if he despises the choice of the family, but the child should never have a veto concerning the Bible’s requirement for a dowry.

Pre-Nuptial Covenants

We also have a problem when the family of either of the marriage partners is more wealthy than the other. Under these circumstances, the wealthy parents have to be careful that they do not create marriages of greed by opportunists seeking to grab an inheritance. The wealthy parents, unless they protect themselves, can end up with their property producing a phony marriage and an incentive for divorce. The solution to this problem is a pre-nuptial agreement in which the poorer member of the potential marriage pledges not to contest, in the event of a divorce, any wealth that may come into the family as a result of the gift or inheritance. This way the poorer member of the marriage can demonstrate that he is entering into the covenant for love instead of money. If the poorer person refuses to sign the pre-nuptial agreement such as outlined above, one can be sure he is more interested in money than love.

Inheritance: Not by Blood or Love Alone

There are other situations that require expert counseling, particularly for those parents wishing to protect their children from marriages prompted by greed. Parents have a duty to control the inheritance of property according to the covenant. Inheritance must not be by blood alone or by emotion called “love,” divorced from demonstrated character.

Personally, I have married off five of my 8 children, all with either a pre-nuptial or a post-nuptial agreement.

(I became a Christian Reconstructionist after the marriage of my first two.) I believe that every Christian Reconstructionist worthy of the name should read carefully the *Institutes of Biblical Law* and make application to their family situation. I recommend Joseph Gandolfo as an expert advisor in nuptial agreements. He can be reached at 800-553-1008. Joe is also an expert on the nation's tax and inheritance laws that must be taken into account to make sure that Caesar is not the happiest one at your funeral and that your daughter or son will have a marriage based upon genuine affection instead of greed. (He will be a speaker at a conference in Naples, Florida, October 10. Write to me for details if you wish

to attend.) We owe our children guidance, because the good man has an obligation to leave an inheritance to his children's children (*Pr. 13:22*).

The fountain of true love is the word of God that produces riches that fade not away.

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MODERN ISSUES IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Preparing Sons and Daughters for Marriage

By Rev. William Einwechter



Christian parents are naturally concerned about the well-being of their children in regard to the present and the future. An area of particular concern is that each of their children have a happy and successful marriage. This concern is heightened by the rampant divorce rate and

generally sorry state of so many marriages today both in society and in the church. So what can parents do to prepare their children for marriage so that they will be able to enjoy a marriage relationship that is blessed of God and not have to endure the pain of an ailing or broken marriage?

The Precept and Promise of Proverbs 22:6

To begin with, let us consider the well-known Scripture of Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This text contains an exhortation and a promise for parents that directly relates to the anxiety we may feel over the future marriages of our beloved sons and daughters. It provides direction and hope for us as we think on the fact that someday our children will be joined in holy matrimony.

Proverbs 22:6 opens with an imperative, "Train up a child." God is saying, "I have given you this child; now, do your duty and train the child!" The Hebrew verb here translated "train" means to imbue, to instruct, make experienced, educate, give training and sound judgment. Interestingly, "train" is related to the Hebrew word for the roof of the mouth (the palate), and its usage in Proverbs 22:6 probably stems from the practice of putting a bridle in the mouth of an animal for the purpose of guidance and training. When God commands us to "train up" a child, he commands us to bring the child into submission to our authority and to fully train him "in the way that he should go." The Hebrew term for "way" indicates a way of living, acting, habits, or manner of life. The phrase "he should go" means, literally, "in accordance with." So, then, "to train up a child in the way he should go" is to train him in accordance with *the way of wisdom and truth as given by God in Scripture*. Proverbs 22:6 commands parents to train their children to live according to the wisdom of God as revealed in his law-word so that their whole life will be governed by the teaching of the Bible.

This command to parents is then followed by a comforting promise: "and when he is old he will not depart from it." Our Lord assures parents that if they train their children according to his law when the children are young, it will come to pass that when they reach adulthood, they will not turn from the path their parents have taught them. The word "depart" means to turn from the way or course, and is often used in the

Bible to refer to a turning from the *right path of God's commands* (cf. *Dt. 9:12; Prov. 13:14*). So if parents are faithful in training their children to walk in the path of God's commands, God promises that their children will not turn away from the right paths of his word when they reach maturity.

The Responsibility to Prepare Children for Marriage

The comprehensive command of Proverbs 22:6 should be specifically applied to the subject of preparing sons and daughters for marriage. The text, by clear implication, instructs parents to train up their children in the way that they should go in regard to marriage. Parents are called to teach their children what God has revealed in his word concerning marriage: the nature and purpose of marriage, the roles of husband and wife, family economics, raising up a godly seed, etc.—this is the parent's *duty* under God's law.

God's promise should also be applied. If parents are scrupulous in educating their children in Biblical principles for marriage, then God promises that when their sons and daughters come to adulthood and are joined in marriage, they will walk in the Biblical ways for marital life that they have been taught. As grown sons and daughters live in marriage according to God's word they will be blessed of God and their marriages will be successful from God's perspective. In short, Proverbs 22:6 contains both a command and a promise that should be directly applied to marriage. Parents are responsible to train their children for marriage, and God's promise is that their training will not be in vain but will lead to godly marriages that are truly blessed of the Lord.

Preparing Sons and Daughters for Marriage

But how can parents go about preparing their children for marriage? What specifically can they do and what areas should their training focus on? Here are some specific suggestions that will help parents in preparing their sons and daughters for marriage:

1. You must lay a foundation for training your children in God's law concerning marriage by leading them to faith in Jesus Christ and a submission to the authority of his word. As Paul teaches in Romans 8, only those who are justified by faith and walk in the Spirit are able to fulfill the righteous teaching of the law of God. It is the Spirit of God who will "work in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Your children must also be taught the authority of God's word to govern all spheres of life, and you must instill in them a Biblical worldview.

2. Train your children to submit to your authority. If you do not, then your children will not be able to function properly in the role of husband or wife. If they have not been trained to submit to God-ordained authority when they are young, your sons will have a problem submitting to the authority of Christ over them as husbands and abuse their authority over their wives, and your daughters

will have difficulty submitting to the authority of their husbands. Unsubmissive husbands and unsubmissive wives spell marital chaos.

3. Teach your children the precepts of God concerning marriage. The Biblical teaching in regard to the nature and purpose of marriage and the roles of husband and wife should be inculcated in the minds of your children. Children need to be taught the covenantal nature of marriage, God's plan for husbands and wives, God's plan for children, God's plan for family finances, communication and problem-solving in the home, etc.

4. Teach your children how to work and assume responsibility. Sons should be taught that someday they will have the duty of providing for their family. Daughters should be taught that someday they will be responsible to manage their household. Accordingly, fathers ought to make sure that their sons are diligent in their work, and have the skills necessary for gainful employment; and mothers ought to make sure that their daughters are skilled in the arts of homemaking.

*Do not think that a week
before marriage you can
sit down with your child
and tell him what he will
need to know for a
successful marriage!*

5. Be an example of a godly marriage to your children. As the saying goes, "More is caught than is taught." The verbal instruction in regard to the Biblical principles for marriage you give to your children should be modeled for your children in your own marriage. The importance of a godly example is critically important! Without this, all other aspects of training your children for marriage will be greatly undermined. The adage, "Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter," applies to the manner in which your children will carry out their relationship with their husband or their wife.

6. Expose your children to positive marital role models. In conjunction with the previous point, it is important that your children see God's will for marriage patterned in the lives of others; no matter how positive your own example is, your children will benefit from the example of the godly marriage of others. Paul exhorted the Philippians to follow his example, but he also called upon them to "mark them which walk" as an example of godly living (*Phil. 3:17*). Mark for your children those who walk in accord with God's law for marriage. Examples of a

godly marriage can be drawn from both church history (e.g., Jonathan and Sarah Edwards) and from those that you and your children both know.

7. Begin your training early. Do not think that a week before marriage you can sit down with your child and tell him what he will need to know for a successful marriage! Begin early and teach your children according to what they can understand. Keep your instruction appropriate to their age and progress your training as they grow older. By the time they reach marriageable age, you should have trained them in the way that they should go concerning marriage.

8. Use the marital problems of others as a springboard to teach the blessing of obedience to God's law for marriage and the cursing of disobedience to God's law for marriage. Today we are surrounded by those who have serious marital problems and by failed marriages that end in divorce. Older children are aware of these troubled and failed marriages. The tragic consequences of disobedience to God's commands are illustrated in a telling fashion in these problem marriages. Do not fail to use these sorrowful situations to teach and exhort concerning the blessings and cursings of God. Instill in your children the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.

Moral impurity is a dangerous virus in marriage. It sows the seeds of marital discord and unfaithfulness and works to undermine the one-flesh union of marriage.

9. Endeavor to keep your children morally pure. The sexual revolution of the Sixties has reaped a bitter harvest in our society and destroyed many a marriage. Explicit sex and moral perversions of all sorts are openly displayed and promoted in the media, advertisements, literature, and art. Your children must be protected from these assaults on the sanctity of the marriage bed that have permeated our culture. Moral impurity is a dangerous virus in marriage. It sows the seeds of marital discord and unfaithfulness and works to undermine the one-flesh union of marriage. Keep the minds of your children pure,

and with Biblical sensitivity, teach your children the holiness of marital love.

10. Protect your children from the destructive effects of dating. Dating is a humanistic perversion of the Biblical pattern of courtship. Dating does not prepare your children for marriage; it does the opposite. It can lead to emotional scars and moral impurity that will undermine their marriage.

11. Teach your children God's will for a marriage partner. God's law forbids the believer to marry an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:13), and commands the Christian to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39). Preparing a child for marriage involves the crucial task of training him to seek a marriage partner from among those who stand in covenant with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

12. Attend a church that upholds God's law and teaches the Biblical standards of marriage. What your children are taught at home should be supplemented and upheld by the teaching ministry of the local church. If your children are taught a standard for marriage that is contrary to that which you are teaching them at home, this inconsistency will undermine your efforts and will create confusion in their minds.

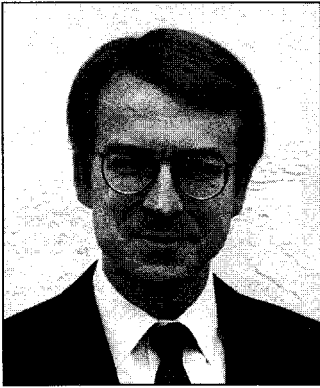
Conclusion

Parents have a mandate from God to "train up a child in the way he should go." This training certainly includes the preparation of the child for marriage. Parents also have a promise from God that faithful training in the ways of the Lord will be honored by him, and he will cause our children to walk in the paths of righteousness. This promise definitely applies to marriage; if we train our children in God's plan and purpose for marriage, he will cause them to walk in his ways and to experience the blessing of a happy, successful, God-honoring marriage. Having heard his command, and being armed with a promise, do not fail to train up your children in God's way for marriage and thus prepare them for one of the most important aspects of life and of taking dominion under God's covenant law—the marriage relationship.

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Leapfrogging “Courtship V1.0”

By Walter Lindsay



Emily Post’s 1922 book on etiquette included the chapter “Chaperons and Other Conventions.” The 1937 edition renamed the chapter “The Vanished Chaperon and Other Lost Conventions.” With the advent of dating, chaperonage passed away, fathers lost their role in selecting suitors and

establishing the new family, and sons and daughters determined for themselves their degree of sexuality.¹ The dreadful results are apparent. Yet this situation is merely the bearer of bad news—through it, God faithfully showed us we have a larger problem than dating.

Sometimes software metaphors describe life well. With software products, the product team must correctly identify the problem it hopes to solve; identify the relevant business and technical constraints and requirements; find good metaphors; and design, build and test. After all that, surprisingly many products miss the mark, adding credence to the oft-repeated phrase “Never buy version 1 of anything.” Regarding courtship, the problem is more than not-dating and emotional purity. We cannot blindly adopt the strange-sounding metaphors of another age. Our circumstances and challenges have changed since chaperons and other pre-dating practices were part of life. We can, however, better look to the future by applying the hard-earned lessons of the past. God has shown us that we have a large cultural problem. He has also given us a rich written heritage that lets us address the larger problem and leapfrog “Courtship V1.0.”

War and Peace: A Culture for Courtship

Sometimes the apostate preserve a godly heritage for later generations. Leo Tolstoy in *War and Peace* tells a story of Russian aristocratic society challenged by Napoleon’s military might between 1805 and 1812. *War and Peace* is not about courtship; it is about a society in which courtship naturally occurs. It shows us the results of courting ways and choices. It gives us hints about solving the larger problem and thereby addressing our courtship concerns.

Tolstoy portrays a society that gives people the chance to build up a wide network of friendships under family-oriented circumstances. For example, Prince Andrei encountered a young woman acquaintance at a social

function, enjoyed her company, was invited to call on the family, and began to spend increasing amounts of time with them. Soon “Everyone in the house realized on whose account Prince Andrei came. . . .”² After seeking advice from Pierre, a mutual friend, he traveled to his father’s estate because he “required his father’s sanction for his marriage.” Prince Andrei’s father replied “. . . I beg of you to put it off a year. . . and then if your love or passion or obstinacy—whatever you chose—is still as great, marry!”³

Compare Prince Andrei’s behavior with modern dating. Pastor Jim West tells how dating diverges from previous courtship practices:

- (1) The introduction of the man to the woman by a member of the family is not considered necessary.
- (2) There is no chaperon.
- (3) There is no commitment on the part of the male or female to continue the relationship beyond the date itself.
- (4) The date is planned by the adolescents themselves, and not by their elders.
- (5) Physical intimacies such as hand-holding, petting, kissing, and sexuality are expected rather than forbidden.⁴

Andrei exemplified the older practices, with the addition that property and financial prospects were also important considerations. Andrei’s courtship was no version 1.0.

Tolstoy also shows us Hélène, a strikingly beautiful woman, “whom one is never tired of feasting one’s eyes upon.”⁵ In today’s terms, she could have been a supermodel. She surrounded herself with men and went to the opera “half-naked.” The narrative frequently mentions her exposed “beautiful bosom.”⁶ On any Friday night, women all across America try to imitate her. She and her father, a prince, lured a wealthy husband by her beauty so that he married her without wise counsel.⁷ She became a brilliant social success and wholly ignored her husband. And God brought judgment. In Tolstoy’s hands, judgment and blessing are linked to wise and godly choices.

In *War and Peace* adults living on their own court adults, adults court young adults who live with parents, and young adults living with parents court. The surrounding circumstances shaped the pattern of the courtship. In one case, children had long promised to marry, and dealt with the consequences. Prince Andrei called on a young woman’s family so he could get to know her. In a third case, old friends realize they are in love. While there is no model of courtship we can draw from the book, it does clearly show courtship ways. Courtship in *War and Peace* involves family authority and hard-nosed

looks at financial prospects. Families had continuity into generations past and into the future. People came to love one another. A mainstay of social life was gathering for discussion in the parlors of homes, a safe place for men and women to build friendships.

How do we apply this to our lives? Gary North speaks of “transmission belts” that preserve the fruits of Christian culture through times of apostasy and judgment.⁸ *War and Peace* is a magnificent *big* transmission belt of societal patterns that naturally hosted multiple types of courtships. Its length lets us immerse ourselves in the lives of the characters and see the consequences of actions naturally develop. It lets us step outside a dating-influenced culture and absorb the assumptions of another time. It preserves for us an understanding that the form of the courtship depended strongly on the circumstances of the couple and the families. It shows us that we should expect to develop a spectrum of courtship models. And it illustrates that courtship is not a parenthetical activity cut off from the rest of life; it is a very special activity that flows and merges into the rest of life.

The Silicon Valley is not just home to multitudes of software developers. We have salesmen, product managers, marketers, venture capitalists, test engineers, systems administrators, and a host of people with other complementary skills. We go to talks at the Computer Literacy Bookstore. We get briefings under non-disclosure agreements so we know what Intel, Microsoft, Sun, IBM, and the rest of the companies with presence in the Valley are preparing. We have to go through the rituals of product launches, presentations to industry analysts, and press tours. We have a whole culture that fosters new product creation in its various forms of startups, spin-off subsidiaries and divisions, innovations from within big companies, and so forth. We get product out the door. We tailor a wide variety of organizations and associations in order to get the job done. And we often fail. Silicon Valley culture has its own versions 1.0, and we have veterans who remember the lessons learned from long experience.

American Christian culture has relatively few of those veterans. One hopes we won't have to repeat all the mistakes our forbears made.

St. Elmo: Godly Individual Character

As one newspaper columnist recently noted, “Any serious person who studies works of what's called ‘historical fiction’ must realize—plot aside—that the reader is acquiring more of the attitudes of the period in which the book was written than of the period in which the book's story takes place.”⁹ By that advice, recently-written stories about “courtship” probably describe version 1.0, 1.2, or at best, version 2.0. By that advice, we should look for people and ages whose habits we can admire. Augusta Jane Evans, author of *St. Elmo*, formed her opinions about gentility in the ante-bellum South, a time that understood courtship better than we. As her

biographer notes about her approach to her first novel, *Inez*, she “was well aware of the moral stigma often attached to novels in that day, but she planned to give her own composition such religious fervor that any opposition to the form would quickly disappear among her readers.”

St. Elmo has that same fervor. It was also one of the great American publishing successes of the 19th century. That is an amazing combination. Not only does the book communicate well, it communicates something worthwhile. In the words of one critic, St. Elmo Murray, the mesmeric title character, “bowed over an entire generation of romantic schoolgirls.” St. Elmo was a rake and a scoundrel, yet the predestinating hand of God was upon him, so even at his worst he had a social grace that made me feel like a boor.

St. Elmo illustrates godly adult friendships that allowed unmarried people to get to know each other well enough for the man to propose. In part, this was due to the structure of social life, but in *St. Elmo* the importance of high standards of personal conduct is obvious. In particular, respect was a crucial part of those friendships. How some of the characters lived out that respect is a revelation. Respect is not like clothes worn on Sunday, but must become part of a man or woman's character. *St. Elmo* illustrates how to live with respect, and that provided the bedrock for several friendships that led to marriage proposals. It also offers a long look at the nature of love.

Most contemporary discussion about courtship targets teenagers living at home. Many today do not fit that pattern. *St. Elmo* illustrates how adults can have the types of friendships that lead to godly courtships. As with *War and Peace*, a mainstay of social life was conversation in peoples' parlors.

When a recent college graduate joins a software company, the old hands may refer to him as a “college newhire.” The veneer most college newhires have wears off in a few months, and his character will begin to show the results of the disciplines of working life soon after. Individuals go through their own version 1.0 stages too. Fortunately, God has provided us resources that let us absorb patterns of godly character without having to make all of the mistakes ourselves. *St. Elmo* and similar books illustrate that godly character paves the way for courtship.

Albion's Seed

We are not the first people needing to rethink courtship. In some areas and times in Christendom, a girl had to prove she could conceive prior to marriage since the man needed children to help on the farm. Young people with some interest in each other slept together in a process called “bundling” from the early Middle Ages until as late as 1830. Many couples, once engaged, had children prior to formal marriage. Medieval European custom allowed unmarried men to have a concubine or

keep a mistress. Many medieval theologians saw all sex, even between husband and wife, as shameful. In Scotland, Ireland and the English border areas, men often abducted their brides. This practice continued in some parts of the American South (e.g., Andrew Jackson abducted his wife with her acquiescence).¹⁰

Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America by David Hackett Fischer is a cultural history of early America. "Folkways . . . exist in advanced civilizations as well as in primitive societies. They are functioning systems of high complexity which have actually grown stronger rather than weaker in the modern world. In any given culture, they always include the following things . . .," one of which is "Marriage ways, ideas of the marriage-bond, and cultural processes of courtship, marriage and divorce."¹¹

Fischer contends that "ways are communicated from one generation to the next by many interlocking mechanisms—child-rearing processes, institutional structures, cultural ethics, and codes of law—which create ethical imperatives of great power. . . ."¹² Fischer compares four distinct British folkways introduced to early America by immigrants. Not only are the descriptions eye opening, but having four different folkways described makes clear the impact of doctrine on the shape of society.

The Puritans believed in "covenanted family":

The builders of the Bay Colony cast their idea of the family in terms of the covenant theology which was so central to their faith. They believed that God's covenant with each individual Christian was enlarged into another sort of contract which they called the family covenant. John Cotton explained, "God hath made a covenant with parents and householders," which bound them not only on their own account, but also in regard to "wives, and children, and servants, and kindred, and acquaintances, and all that are under our reach, either by way of subordination, or coordination."

Thus, the covenanted family became a complex web of mutual obligations between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. The clarity of this contractual idea, the rigor of its enforcement and especially the urgency of its spiritual purpose, set New England Puritans apart from other people—even from other Calvinists—in the Western world.¹³

The Puritans built their family and courtship practices around the idea of covenant. For example, single men and women were not allowed to live at home, but had to reside with a family.¹⁴

How did the web of obligations of covenant family direct the shape of courtship? Puritan courtship practices were "designed to reconcile two requirements of New England courtship—the free consent of the young, and strict supervision by their elders. Both of these elements were thought necessary to a covenanted marriage."¹⁵

One way they carried this out was through a modified form of bundling:

Customs of courtship in New England were carefully designed to allow young people privacy enough to discover if they loved one another, at the same time that parents maintained close supervision. This was the purpose of "bundling," a European custom which became widespread in New England. The courting couple were put to bed together, "tarrying" all night with a "bundling board" between them. Sometimes the young woman's legs were bound together in a "bundling stocking" which fitted her body like a glove.¹⁶

Commonly that's all she wore. A New England ballad from the era reads,

But she is modest, also chaste
While only bare from neck to waist,
And he of boasted freedom sings,
Of all above her apron strings.¹⁷

One wonders how much he wore, and whether the room was dark. Seventeenth century New England had one of the lowest prenuptial pregnancy rates in the world,¹⁸ suggesting that other peoples that practiced bundling lacked bundling boards and bundling stockings. This custom would offend most Christians today. It is the author's suspicion that it is God's mercy that this custom died.

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Another custom was the "courting stick, a tube six or eight feet long with an open bell at each end. A New England antiquarian wrote more than a century ago, 'in the presence of the entire family, lovers seated formally on either side of the great fireplace carried on this chilly telephonic love-making.'¹⁹ The couple whispered back and forth to each other while the family remained nearby. Unlike bundling, God improved on the technology of courting sticks by providing the telephone. Surely the Puritans would have developed ways that let a courting couple use telephones for private conversation in supervised public settings.

The Puritans required that both parents and children give their free consent before marriage. When parents refused to let their children marry at all, children sued

and won. But “the process of a covenanted marriage began with complex rituals of courtship that were strictly regulated by law and custom. . . . By and large, Puritan parents did not arrange the marriages of their children. Suitors carefully sought the consent of parents before beginning a courtship, and sent small presents to ease the way. . . . [T]he Puritans cherished true love, and insisted that it was a prerequisite of a happy marriage. The Puritans used the expression ‘falling in love.’ They believed that love should normally precede marriage.”²⁰

Puritan brides-to-be chose the texts of sermons preached to announce engagement with as much care as modern brides choose their wedding dresses.²¹ Yet these people were not other-worldly. They realized that if a man and a woman were alone together adultery could result, and set up conventions against it,²² but at the same time reveled in marital sex.²³

A limited goal such as “purity until marriage” will produce a model of courtship aimed at preserving virginity. That is a laudable. A much larger goal such as “covenanted family” will produce something very different. “Purity until marriage” brackets out a time in life. “Covenanted family” incorporates a newborn in its warmth from birth, and does not cease even for the elderly. From a “covenanted family” perspective, disciplines and patterns relating to courtship are lifelong, and the ways of courtship are part of a much larger whole.

The Puritans fundamentally changed the Western ideals of love and sex. “The Puritan doctrine of sex was a watershed in the cultural history of the West. The Puritans devalued celibacy, glorified companionate marriage, affirmed married sex as both necessary and pure, established the ideal of wedded romantic love, and exalted the role of the wife.”²⁴ Would that we could do the same!

The Art of Choosing Your Love

What is a big enough vision that we can develop godly courtship ways today? Let’s begin by counting the cost. First, regarding wedding customs:

Betrothal and wedding, private in the sense of not involving officialdom, were public in the sense of overt. It was important for the community at large to be informed. Besides the exchange of pledges (*dos* and *donation*) the betrothal ceremony involved the exchange of promises between groom-to-be and father of the bride-to-be: “Do you promise to give your daughter to me to be my wedded wife?” “The gods bring luck! I betroth her.” The couple kissed and the young man placed an iron ring on the third finger of his fiancée’s left hand. A Roman conviction that a vein ran from this finger straight to the heart was passed on by Macrobius (c. A. D. 400) to the Middle Ages, whose bridal couples transmitted the tradition of ring and ring finger to modern times. The wedding ceremony a few days later was also marked by long-lasting symbols: white bridal gown and veil, a best man (*auspex*)

who pronounced a legal formula, a shower from the wedding guests not of rice but walnuts, a wedding feast, and carriage of the bride over the threshold of the bridal chamber.²⁵

This is a description of Roman marriage customs. Second, in the 12th century Pope Alexander reconciled two positions on how to determine when a couple was actually married:

First, reaffirming indissolubility, he accepted Peter Lombard’s “words of the present” [i.e. “words stated explicitly that they took each other, starting at this moment, as man and wife”] as the essential of marriage, given the minimum ages of fourteen for the bridegroom, twelve for the bride. But a little later he in effect accepted most of Gratian’s view by declaring that “words of the future,” given as early as age seven, also created a valid marriage bond when they were followed by physical consummation.²⁶

No white veil? Letting twelve-year-olds marry? This author is not suggesting either. I only suggest that though our perspectives on veils and twelve-year-olds have worked well, they are cultural, not Scriptural. If circumstances push us, we abandon what is cultural, but we cling to what is Scriptural.

Therein is the brilliance of Jim West’s *The Art of Choosing Your Love* and its companion *Christian Courtship vs. The Dating Game*. Both are purely Scriptural but filled with shrewd examples apparently culled from West’s experience as a pastor.

Gies notes that “Of the marriage doctrines adopted by Gratian, Peter Lombard, and the papacy, Michael M. Sheehan says: ‘It is unlikely that all the consequences of those twelfth-century decisions have yet been realized [in the twentieth].’”²⁷ If we set for courtship the goal of “purity until marriage” we will likely set up models that create problems that last a long time. If we set for our courtship ways the goal of fulfilling God’s creation mandate, we get a different picture. Pastor West writes,

The art of choosing your love begins with creation. When God made man, He did not place him into a house or into a bed. God placed the man into a garden to till the ground and to dress (beautify) the earth God did this because there was work to be done. Man was made a working man (*Gen. 1:18-29*) . . . by and large, God’s criteria for making the woman related to man’s need to have a loving companion for the work of the kingdom. The Holy Spirit noted that Adam needed a working counterpart to work joyously in God’s vineyard.

In our previous study, *Christian Courtship vs. The Dating Game*, we learned that marriage is a “covenant of loving companionship.” We could improve that definition by also saying that

“marriage is a covenant of working companionship” too. It was not good that the man should work alone.²⁸

This is a *big* topic. It has enormous implications. And it is intimately intertwined with godly courtship.

Conclusion

Scripture includes many courtships. In times when believers were surrounded by apostates, they traveled to find a mate. Rebekah chose to travel to Isaac, after Abraham’s servant had traveled to find a suitable, godly mate for his master’s son (*Gen. 24:58*). Isaac instructed his sons not to marry women from the surrounding peoples (*Gen. 28*). When living in captivity, Israelites at times were given to pagans. Both Esther and Joseph were given to pagans but saved their people. Othniel won Caleb’s daughter Achsah by overthrowing a Canaanite city (*Jos. 15:16, 17*). Israelite men were allowed to capture heathen women during a war (*Num. 31:18*), and in one case the Hebrews decided to let the men of Benjamin take wives by kidnapping maidens from Shiloh (*Jud. 21:21*). David and Abigail married because she kept him from killing Nabal, her husband (*1 Sam. 25*). Samson “saw” a Philistine woman and told his parents to arrange for a marriage, and “it was of the Lord” (*Jud. 14:1-4*). Michal, Saul’s daughter, fell in love with David, and Saul’s requirement was that David kill 100 Philistines and bring back their foreskins; David decided to become the king’s son-in-law, and with flourish brought back 200 Philistine foreskins (*1 Sam. 18*). Masters could give their slaves a type of marriage (*Ex. 21:1-4*). Ruth slept at Boaz’s feet and invoked the levirate (*Ruth 3; Dt. 25:5-10*).

The Scriptural examples do not illustrate any single model of courtship. At the same time, family or church authorities can righteously set up models of courtship for those under their authority. Models may include various stages and rituals, and venture into areas that Scripture has not proscribed. Models are excellent starting points.

Courtship challenges the worldview of many parents. The stakes are obvious. It is a great breeder of uncertainty, and makes parents and families hungry to learn more. Answers to the fears and hungers take the discussion far beyond the boundaries of courtship models into the broad ways of life in Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord of all of life, and courtship is a topic that creates opportunities for discussion and learning across much of life. The Puritans revolutionized the ideals of love and sex for Western society. The American colonials came to create a new society and way of life. Leapfrogging “courtship v1.0” is more learning how to live a godly life than learning a model and set of rules, and opens the door for sharing future-oriented faith for those around you. The Puritans and American colonials fundamentally changed Western society; courtship, both by building

godly families and by creating opportunities to share a full-orbed faith, is a key for changing the world in our time. And Christ promised,

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (*Jn. 13:35*)

The witness of godly courtships is a great challenge and witness to the world. May God grant us the grace to succeed.

¹ Jim West, *Christian Courtship vs. the Dating Game*, (Palo Cedro, CA, 1993), 11.

² Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Rosemary Edmunds, (Penguin, 1982), 555, Bk. 2 Pt. #22. Citations for *War and Peace* will include book, part and section numbers for the convenience of people with other editions.

³ *ibid.*, 559, Bk. 2, Pt. 3, #23.

⁴ West, 10.

⁵ Tolstoy, 235, Bk. 1, Pt. 3, #1.

⁶ *ibid.*, 665, Bk. 2, Pt. 5, #9; 246, Bk. 1, Pt. 3, #2.

⁷ *ibid.*, 246, Bk. 1, Pt. 3, #2; 370, 371, Bk. 2 Pt. 1, #370.

⁸ Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, TX, 1987), 232.

⁹ Richard Grenier, “Cold Mountain: Cool but not Real,” *The Washington Times National Weekly Edition*, Jan. 18, 1998, 29.

¹⁰ For example, see Paul Johnson, *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830* (New York, 1991), 498; Francis and Joseph Gies, *Marriage and Family in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1987), 139, 154, 155, 242, 243; Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1990), 41; David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York, 1989), 669.

¹¹ Fischer, 8.

¹² *ibid.*, 10.

¹³ *ibid.*, 69, 70.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 73.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 81.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 79.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 80.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 89, 90.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 79, 80.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 78, 79.

²¹ *ibid.*, 81.

²² *ibid.*, 91.

²³ Ryken, 44-51.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 53.

²⁵ Gies, 23.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 139, 140.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 140.

²⁸ Jim West, *The Art of Choosing Your Love* (Palo Cedro, CA, 1994), 7, 9.

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Are Recreational One-On-One Relationships Biblical?

By Jim West



The philosophical heart of the institution of dating is the supposition that one-on-one, male-female relationships are not only healthy, but necessary for the two to get to know each other. What shall we say to this challenge?

We need to remember that the first one-on-one relationship was with a view to marriage (*Gen. 2:18*). God made the woman because it was not good that the man should be alone. After Adam named the animals he knew he was alone. Then the Lord God put the man asleep and removed a rib from his side. When Adam arose from his sleep, he felt more incomplete—and indeed he was, for Eve was his “missing rib.” The Bible simply tells us that God brought the woman to the man. Here was the first “date,” as both Adam and Eve were alone in the Garden. What was the purpose of this first date? Adam deduced: *This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh . . . Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they two shall become one flesh* (*Gen. 2:23a, 24*). Here the first one-on-one relationship is interpreted by the Holy Spirit through Adam as justification for the marriage covenant and its accompanying sexuality.

This creation pattern presents an interesting paradox, when viewed in light of the modern phenomenon of dating. Clearly, dating clashes with God’s creation model and yet, those who do date and engage in consummated or unconsummated premarital sex do so naturally and spontaneously. *The one-on-one romantic relationship (understood in terms of creation) logically demands a sexual response.* Such a response, then, is Adam (not just in a fallen sense) but in a creation sense. One man alone, with one woman alone, climaxes in the two becoming one (*Gen. 2:24*). Of course, the problem with recreational dating is that it envisions the one-on-one relationship *apart* from marriage. But the sexuality part is properly interpreted. This means that those parents who give their children one-on-one dating “privileges” should not be surprised when they discover that their children have fornicated: the one-on-one relationship is designed of old for such sexuality. The dating “game” is the built-in occasion for such ungodly behavior. Those who remain

sexually unscathed in such relationships do so unnaturally, as they are really fighting off the creational purpose for one-on-one relationships.

This, of course, does not mean that a Christian man and Christian woman cannot have a friendship relationship based upon Christ’s love for his church. Paul spoke of the women who labored with him in the gospel (*Phil. 4:3*). We even find Elijah the Prophet staying in the same house as the widow of Zarephath, in the upper room (*1 Ki. 17:19*). Even a limited one-on-one relationship may be permissible on this basis, although such an arrangement must be vigilantly watched for signs of romanticism. Certainly, men and women may sit together in church, and not be partitioned off into separate blocks of pews!

It is most proper for single men and women to gather for Christian fellowship too. However, one needs to be wary of many “singles’ groups” which are often a pretext for pick-ups and dating. Many singles’ groups are geared to usurp the role of the family.

The Silence of the Bible

The first thing to remember about one-on-one relationships is that nothing is found in the Bible about what may be called “random dating” or “recreational dating.” Almost all of what passes as “dating” today rests upon the recreational premise: “Mary is beautiful and charming; therefore I am going to take her out.” There is no commitment from either party to continue the relationship beyond the first date. Likely, there may even be others that the two would consider dating given the opportunity. Biblically, if a one-on-one relationship could be justified, it would certainly have to be with a view to marriage—*always a view toward marriage*. A more Biblical mind-set would be: “Mary is godly; I want to pursue a relationship with her that, Lord-willing, and with her father’s permission, will consummate in marriage.” Not only is there the precedent of the creation which militates against recreational dating, but we see the same throughout Biblical history as one-on-one relationships are never entertained apart from the perspective of marriage (*Ruth 3:9*).

The Sin of Lust

The second consideration is sin, and particularly the sin of lust. The Bible speaks about lust as “deceitful,” and young men are to “flee youthful lusts” (*Eph. 4:22; 2 Tim. 2:22*). The difference between male and female is that the

male lusts, while the female lusts to be lusted after. Lust is not just a distant or peripheral threat, but something that regularly attacks the Christian, causing him to sin and to have a distorted view of reality. Lust is not love, since love is giving-centered, while lust is self-centered. Love is the fulfilling of God's law; lust is in violation of God's law. For example, God's law says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (*Rom. 13:8-10*). Fornication is not love; fornication is lust because fornicators seek to satisfy themselves apart from the responsibilities of marriage. Another example: adultery is not love, but lust. Certainly, the adulterer has damaged his neighbor. He has robbed his neighbor of his wife; he has inflicted untold mental and spiritual harm upon himself and his adulteress, harmed the children of his or the adulteress's marriage, etc. Adultery is also the occasion for violence, even murder. *Adultery is a capital offense because adultery is manstealing and treason against the family. For the woman, fornication is treason against her father (Dt. 22:21).*

The difference between male and female is that the male lusts, while the female lusts to be lusted after.

Lust is so basic to the human constitution that immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, they fled from God, while hiding their secret parts behind apron-leaf clothing. Why? Because they instinctively knew that sin had contaminated the organs of life. By lusting after the tree, their sexuality became polluted immediately. Paul even wrote Timothy, a man of God who was filled by the Holy Spirit, and warned him about his "youthful lusts" (*2 Tim. 2:22*). Lust operates in a vicious cycle. The lust in the man fans the lust in the woman, and the lust to be lusted after in the woman fans the lust in the man. Lust does not submit to the authority of God's law; rather—lust is a law unto itself. This means that while the woman may think that she "loves" the man, and that while the man may sincerely think that he "loves" the woman, lust may be at work. Certainly, both the Christian parent and the Christian son and daughter ought to be aware of this. If they really are, then they will not trust themselves to be placed in such an explosive and vulnerable situation. The Bible says: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (*Jer. 17:9*). Certainly not men and women who

know the depths of their depravity. Thus, the Christian young man and woman should not trust themselves. And, if they do challenge their parents with the words, "You don't trust me," the response of realistic parents should be: "True, and I wouldn't trust myself either." In any case, the matter is not so simple as the parents not trusting the children; rather, it is the children placing too much trust in themselves.

The Crucial Role of Parents in Courtship

The third reason for our questioning the legitimacy of one-on-one, male-female dating relationships relates to the God-ordained role of the father. Since the Bible speaks of those who marry and who are "given" in marriage, it clearly assumes that the father gives away only what he has. Even the first marriage was not without an audience, *for it was God himself who was acting as Father when he brought the woman to the man*. This means that the father exercises authority over his daughter so that she may be "given" in marriage or kept as a virgin (*1 Cor. 7:37*). He may give her in marriage or not give her in marriage (*1 Cor. 7:38*). The Biblical father both trains his daughter to be godly and protects his daughter from ungodliness. The parents not only give authoritative advice (*Pr. 6:20-29; 7:6-27; 9:13-18*), but have the power to give or withhold.

The upshot of this is that the male-female relationship is a family matter, especially the regulatory concern of the father. That more fathers do not take active roles in the pairing of their children, or in their children's would-be spouses, is a dismal commentary on the state of fatherhood today. The Biblical father not only trains his children; he also protects his children. This is what fatherhood is. This means that one-on-one relationships are out of accord with the God-ordained responsibility of fathers to supervise the romantic interests of their children, especially their daughters.

Keep in mind that even though Adam and Eve had a one-on-one relationship, they were not entirely alone. In the Garden, God himself was acting as Father when he "brought" the woman to the man. Clearly, there was paternal oversight there, and such oversight is the divine pattern for earthly fathers who "give" their children in marriage. Therefore, it is not only incumbent upon fathers to place themselves in the vanguard of their children's matrimonial plans, but to teach their children that their aspirations for marriage must be validated by parents.

From this we should be able to see that the father's role is not just advisory. Nor does his role consist of giving last-minute advice and warnings to his children about a date that he may or may not care for (*e.g.*, "Don't get pregnant!"). Such a father fits the fatherly job description often provided by the media. A good example is the film, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, which is about a young white woman who brings home her fiancée, who happens to be black. (We are concerned here with parental authority, not with miscegenation.) The plot concerns

whether the surprised parents will approve the impending marriage. The black man wants the parents to make the decision to approve the match. This is his desire, not because he believes the father really has that responsibility, but because he does not want his fiancée to choose between himself and her parents. So, the father must make a decision to approve or not to approve the match. The father is thus thrown into a role that he does not want to exercise. Finally, he makes his decision, a decision that is typical of the abandonment of fatherly responsibility. He says:

Where John made his mistake, I think, is attaching so much importance to what we think because in the final analysis, it doesn't matter a damn what we think. The only thing that matters is what they feel and how much they feel, for each other.

This accurately sums up the philosophy of modern day fatherhood! The real problem is not rebellious teenagers, but rebellious parents who want no part of Christ-centered parenting.

We should be aware from the outset that the whole media is against the Biblical father. Even the otherwise wonderful film *The Sound of Music* portrays Captain Von Trapp as churlish and intruding upon his seventeen-year old daughter's affection for the postal boy (who turns out to be a Nazi!).

What is particularly significant about the male-female relationship in Genesis 2 is not just that God is the Creator of marriage, but that from the beginning of creation, *he also ordained the rules of courtship*. From Genesis 2, those rules are two-fold:

1. One-on-one relationships are designed with a view to marriage only.

2. The father supervises the courtship relationship. Such was even the case before sin entered the world when God acted as a father. Now that sin and lust have entered the world, the need for courtship oversight has increased.

From these considerations, we can see the rules of courtship must NOT be determined by cultural norms alone. One may wish to ignore the matrimonial practices of the Jews (such as night weddings, approval from a near kinsman in certain circumstances, the dowry". The method of courtship described in Genesis 2 returns us to creation itself. Because of this we can safely say the courtship laws of the Jews were based on God's creation laws, not ever-changing cultural distinctives. For example, only a flaming feminist would challenge the Jewish practice of the woman

adopting the name of her husband (*Is. 4:1*). When the name of the husband was placed on his wife, it was not only a sign that the two had become one, but that the woman would be in subjection to her husband.

We also must not suffocate the broader implications of even the temporary cultural norms of Israel. For example, the Old Testament dowry tells us that the father could require that his daughter be covered by a life-insurance policy prior to his granting permission for her marriage. It could also be said that the best definition of marriage stems not from creation by itself, but also from the interpretation of creation by Moses and the prophets who define marriage as a covenant of loving companionship (*Pr. 2:17; Mal. 2:14*).

The real problem is not rebellious teenagers, but rebellious parents who want no part of Christ-centered parenting.

What are the abiding marriage practices of the Old Testament people of God? For one, the father gives away the bride. Another is that the bride secures the favor of her father. Another is that no one-on-one relationship (recreational dating) is permissible unless the man and the woman are engaged or married. The Bible endorses *family courtship*.

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Note: You can obtain the entire book, *Christian Courtship vs. The Dating Game* by Pastor Jim West, from which the article above is excerpted. The booklet costs \$4.00. Write Christian Worldview Ministries, P.O. Box 603, Palo Cedro, CA 96973-0603. See also <http://www.snowcrest.net/cwm>.

An Account of My Covenant Courtship

By *Daja Lynne Abdelaziz*



The “Christian Courtship Movement” has been receiving a lot of flack these days, not just from non-Christians, but unfortunately from those claiming Christ. For some, the term stirs up false ideas of forced marriages and over-controlling parents and pastors. However, for me it has proven to be a great

blessing. I used to say “by faith,” but it is now by experience, that there is a better way than our modern concepts of dating.

Personal Qualities

In the summer of 1996, while doing mission work in Pakistan, I wrote a list of the top ten qualities I pray for in a husband. It had many revisions until November of 1997 when I had my list completed. I placed it in what is known as the “Love Chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. Each time I came across that piece of paper in that passage, I would pray for my future husband. I would pray for his protection and for God’s guidance. I also adapted a prayer that Elisabeth Elliot prayed for her daughter: “Keep her from and for the man she is to marry.” It was important that I not realize who he was too soon. I, like most people, I believe, like to get ahead of God. If I knew his will ahead of time, I for sure would have had it all botched-up! So I prayed, “Lord, keep him from me.” I also pray that the Lord would keep him FOR me. I desired someone with purity. Certainly people make mistakes, but purity is always possible. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:1). How much better, though, to have never lost the purity from the beginning!

The list I wrote included the following things: (It did not include “Christian,” since that is a given and no man ever was compared to the list who was not first a believer [1 Cor. 6:14]):

1. Clear-cut vision (*Pr. 29:18; Hab. 2:2-3*). I desired someone who had an idea of where he was going in life. Not that every step had to be mapped out, but I wanted to have someone I could follow. It has been demonstrated throughout history that if a man does not know where he is going, that’s exactly where he will take his wife!

2. Teachable spirit (*Pr. 3:11-12; Pr. 1:5-7*). Every Christian needs to be able to be taught and ready to receive the doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness that comes from the word of God.

3. Under authority (*Rom. 13:1-5; Lk. 7:6-10*). A person who is a good servant and follower will develop the qualities necessary in a good leader. The Bible tells us that those who wish to be the greatest in the kingdom must be a servant of all.

4. Leader (*Eph. 5:22-33; Pr. 31:23*). As clearly taught in Scripture, the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Here I would pray that my future husband would not be afraid to be a leader and take the authority and responsibility that go with this.

5. Same beliefs (*Am. 3:3*). Under this heading I have six points on which I felt it was important we agreed. I will not list them here, for fear that they would cause debate or division. Some are standards of my church and others very personal. However, I prayed for someone that held to those six convictions. “How can two walk together unless they be agreed?”

6. Clear conscience (*Ec. 11:9; Rom. 13:5; 1 Tim. 3:8-9; 1 Pet. 3:15-17*). Marriage is difficult enough by itself, without bringing into it a host of emotional or spiritual baggage! I prayed that my husband would have freedom from his past and purity of his heart today.

7. Sense of humor (*Pr. 17:22*). Personally, I love to laugh and I need someone to laugh with me.

8. Good with children (*Ps. 127:3-5; Mt. 18:2-6*). The Bible clearly teaches that children are a blessing and a heritage of the Lord. It is my conviction to have as many children as God will grant. Therefore, I needed someone equally minded in this area, someone who loves children and accepts them as a blessing from God, and not as an added burden, as the world would have us believe.

9. Financially free (*Rom. 13:7-8*). I strongly believe that Christians should not be in financial bondage and debt. I believe that if we apply Biblical principles of tithing, giving, and saving, we can remain free from the bondage of debt. A new marriage does not need the additional strain of financial trouble. One of the main things couples fight over is the god of money! It stirs up

plenty of trouble when a couple has not applied, nor learned, the Biblical principles of money.

10. Prayer warrior (*1 Thes. 5:17; 1 Tim 2:8; Rom. 12:12*). The old adage is still true, “A family that prays together, stays together.” Prayer acts as the glue that holds successful marriages together.

I prayed in faith, believing that if God should choose to give me the gift of marriage, he would also give me to someone with whom I was equally yoked. Equally yoked is more than our basic faith in Christ; it also includes the practical aspects of the Christian life.

My Courtship

There is a mission group that travels around the United States each year called the Missionaries to America. They have approximately twelve people from twelve different countries who evangelize the U. S. for one year at a time. My church was hosting the team for a week, and my family was housing several with us. Through many bizarre circumstances, it happened that a young man named Gana, from Mongolia, was staying with my brother. In hindsight, it was not really happenstance, but God’s unique providence. Throughout the week I drove a man from Zambia, a man from Panama, as well as Gana to and from their speaking and singing engagements. During the week there was no emotional talk nor physical contact. Gana showed equal attention to all members of my family and we had many fun, as well as serious, times as a family. I stress “as a family.” It’s important to know how a potential spouse relates in a family environment and not strictly on a one-on-one basis. At the end of the week, we all knew that something had changed between Gana and me. The next few weeks were filled with conversations on the phone and with letters. Still there was no emotional talk nor physical contact. There was lots of praying, though. James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” I asked God many times for wisdom.

One day Gana called and had that “talk” with my Dad. When my Dad hung up the phone he asked, “So, are you willing to live in Mongolia?”

I should add that, all my life I have felt a burden and a call to foreign missions. I have traveled a good deal and have done mission work in both Mexico and Pakistan. So, the fact that Dad posed that question did not surprise me. What surprised me was my parents’ peace and complete trust in God. They felt the hand of God guiding us and they never said, “Mongolia?!” No way!” At that point I did what any sensible young woman would have done: I began to fast. I prayed, fasted, and implored God for wisdom. I searched God’s word and listened for what God was saying through it.

After a couple of days of prayer, something very

strange happened. Another man called and asked my Dad if I could be “his partner in life,” as the man put it.

Many people, when approached about the concept of courtship or non-dating, say, “Well, how will you ever get married if you don’t date?!” I’d gone years without a boyfriend and when I told people that God would provide, they doubted my sanity and my God. It was my conviction that God could supply without my being on the hunt. To those who doubted that a person could marry without dating—take notice that God is all-powerful. When we commit ourselves to do things God’s way, he does provide.

Now, things had gotten a little dizzying! I not only had to decide about Gana, but about the new man. Although I had no feelings for the new man, I still appealed to God. I took a few days and spiritually and emotionally separated myself from the situation. I was not choosing between the two or one man over the other man. In actuality, it could have been neither. With my parents’ counsel and God’s guidance, I came to a decision. I chose Gana. He met each of the ten things for which I had been praying. I think God brought the other man along only to show me, and perhaps those doubting, that God can and will provide a husband. God answered my prayer better than I could have ever answered it myself: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. . .” (*Eph. 3:20*).

My story is unlike all others! Gana returned to Mongolia shortly after I accepted his proposal. He is making things ready for me. He is working to return to the United States next year. He is not called to live in the United States. He is on staff at his church and is called to stay there. Mongolia has known Christ for only seven years. There are only seven to eight thousand Christians in the nation. He says, “My country needs me. America doesn’t need me.” But America needs a lot more like him—those who are committed to purity and the word of God!

Before he returned to Mongolia, he did spend some more time with my family in our home. We have a hands-off, lips-off courtship. We have agreed that the first time we ever come together will be at the altar, when the pastor says, “You may kiss the bride.” In Douglas Wilson’s book entitled, *Her Hand In Marriage*, he says, “We somehow think a godly Christian is one who can pre-heat the oven without cooking the roast.” Since, as intelligent humans, we knew that it is nearly impossible to start a fire and not let it burn, we decided to keep ourselves to ourselves until marriage.

The “cleanness” of our courtship has been a beautiful thing to see. It has encouraged my Christian walk and made me stand in awe of how great a God we serve. When Gana and I would discuss things, we would do so sitting right there on the living room couch. Frequently my parents would be sitting with us and we would all discuss all things openly! There are no secrets. It is pure and holy.

While there are some basic guidelines, every courtship is unique. Anyone following the Biblical model will wait until a marriageable age; keep himself pure until marriage; go through the proper authority channels, *i.e.*, parents and pastors; and have a relationship based on Jesus Christ and his word. Yet, not very many will have a story like mine. God is quite creative and will do things in a special way each time. When we apply his basic principles, we are showing God that we trust him enough to let him plan our lives.

Still, there will be skeptical people in the church who will want to cling to the world's counterfeit of dating. But, that's just what it is, a counterfeit. The world would like us to believe that we can have good results even if we avoid

God's blueprint. God may help us to work through the problems we have created for ourselves, but it will never take the place of the original plan that God designed.

I eagerly await the day when Christians will start approaching the issue of dating and courtship with purity and holiness in mind, rather than how much fun they can get out of life. Purity is not an impossible goal. We can save ourselves for our future mates, not because we might get a STD or an unwanted pregnancy, but because of covenant.

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Courtship, or Betrothal?

By Ingrid Dabl

"Divorce her quietly. . . ." (Mt. 1:19)



Have you ever wondered why Joseph was going to have to *divorce* Mary if they weren't married yet? Sounds like a rash way to break up, to me! But the Bible records nothing abnormal about Joseph's approach to his relationship with Mary. This strange account raises several questions about Biblical romance.

Just what is the Biblical standard for relationships? Christians across many denominations are becoming increasingly discontent with the current cultural norm known as dating. They are turning in large numbers to the Bible for a new approach to relationships. The "dating game" has pretty much seen its day in many areas of modern Christian culture. Young people are now encouraged to give up the "world's idea of dating" and replace it with "Biblical" courtship.

Defining Courtship

When I was first introduced to the idea of courtship, I saw it presented as revolutionary, the latest and greatest insight into Christian romance. As the idea gained

popularity, many began to mix their personal convictions with formal definitions. I didn't realize how subjective the opinions on courtship had become until I heard my pastor's wife remark that every Christian girl she talked with defined courtship differently. It soon became evident that there wasn't an objective Biblical standard for what makes a relationship godly and what doesn't.

Definitions include everything from the actual process of courting to a pre-courtship code of conduct. A subtly pietistic definition of courtship emphasizes it as a means to remain pure throughout the single years. This view often elevates singleness to a higher form of godliness and presents marriage as a secondary condition of life. Young people are encouraged to "die to" the desire to be married and dedicate their lives to single service. A "courtship covenant" was even developed to facilitate this: "Dedicating the years of my youth to God rather than being preoccupied with the opposite sex."¹ Although it does seek to purge Christian youth of the "teenage dating syndrome," taken to an extreme such teaching creates a sort of monastic approach to relationships. Another, less extreme, view presents courtship as a form of parentally controlled dating. One young lady defined it as "bypassing the dangers found in dating because of parental involvement." Still another approach sees courtship as the actual process of getting to know a person as a possible candidate for marriage: "Courting is a season in which a couple 'officially' and deliberately seeks confirmation concerning God's will for marriage by deepening the emotional and spiritual aspects of their friendship."² Still others see courtship as postponed

dating, stressing “marriageable age,” and avoiding relationships until marriage is actually an option. One of the first proponents of “Biblical” courtship defined it as, “A romantic relationship between a young man and a young woman in which both are of marriageable age, have the full blessing of their parents and are seriously contemplating marriage.”³

Although these definitions successfully elevated courtship above the immature, self-focused idea of dating, they still have one thing in common with it: the decision to proceed on to marriage is left up to how the parties emotionally respond to the courtship. Marriage is a consideration, not a consecutive step in the process of the relationship. Courtship, like dating, is at the core a *trial relationship*, a chance for a couple to emotionally experiment with the idea of marriage.

Such a Distinction Is Not a Distinction

In 1986 Jonathan Lindvall, who has since changed his position on the issue, stated, “The distinction between dating and courting lies in the *intent* of the relationship. . . . [T]he purpose of the relationship is to *consider* marriage.”⁴ But can this approach really be called the Biblical alternative to dating? Is it not essentially the same idea? Courtship is designed to *consider* marriage. It still retains the option to sever the relationship for any subjective reason. Opponents of dating most often attack the shopping mentality: Take it out. Try it on for size. Take it back if it doesn’t fit. Dating encourages a couple to “try the relationship on for size.” And if it doesn’t work, break it up. Courtship may raise the age, throw in some morality, and check with the parents, but it is in essence the same idea: “try the relationship on for size” before committing to marriage.

Courtship claims to be the Biblical alternative to dating, but it clings to the notion that the couple’s *feelings* should dictate the extent of the relationship. But the Bible rarely assigns such weight to fickle human emotion. Rather than Scripture, the origin of emotionalism was the “eighteenth century philosophical movement we now call Romanticism. Among other things, this movement emphasized passion rather than logic. Writers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau lamented that Western civilization had fallen into the ‘error’ of exalting reason over feelings. He proposed making decisions based on emotion rather than intellect.”⁵ A resulting idea was that emotional love became a prerequisite rather than a by-product of marriage. Marry the one you love, rather than the Biblical mandate: *love* the one you marry⁶ (*Eph. 5:25; Tit. 2:4*). The influence of these ideas is evident in both dating and Christian courtship.

What, Then, Is the Biblical Distinction?

We must again look at the question I raised about Mary and Joseph. At the time of Christ’s birth, Mary was betrothed (or pledged) to Joseph. Many liken this period

to our modern engagement. But because of Joseph’s decision to “divorce her quietly” (*Mt. 1:19*), it was obviously more serious than the type of engagement we practice today. A legal (only by conditions stipulated in the law) divorce was required to break their agreement. Mary, found with child, would not have been simply guilty of promiscuity, but the greater crime of adultery. The law prescribes penalties for immorality based on marital status (*Dt. 22:22-29*). Mary would have been judged by the law that made the immorality with a betrothed girl worthy of capital punishment (*Dt. 22:23-24*). This law held trespasses against a betrothal to the same standard as those against marriage. It recognized that a betrothed couple would have already entered into a covenant before God, thus making them bound to each other. In contrast, an unbetrothed girl found guilty of immorality was not put to death, only required to marry (*Ex. 22:16-17*). This appears to be a double standard, unless it is noted that the former would be a violation of an *existing*, as opposed to a pending, covenant. It would literally be adultery. Joseph knew that even though they had not yet come together, he and Mary were covenantally bound. His decision to divorce quietly was a choice to save her life.

The Biblical distinction is this: *relationships with the intended end of marriage are begun with a legal covenant and are therefore binding*. The notion of a romantic trial period never appears in Scripture. The Bible recognized three marital states: married, unmarried, and betrothed. Though not yet married, betrothed couples are bound by a legal covenant. The term *covenant* can be defined as a binding agreement by blood, a life-or-death commitment. Establishing the marriage covenant at the point of betrothal fits with the English etymology of the word *vow* (what the couple takes at the marriage ceremony). It means “affirming one’s beliefs.”⁷ Marriage vows are essentially affirming one’s belief in an existing covenant, bringing it to its consummation.

God’s law never made allowance for experimental romance. Extreme forms of such behavior God placed under a strong sanction to marry (*Ex. 22:16-17*). And he completely outlaws them with sanctions against lying, theft, and fraud. If a courtship or engagement is broken off, at least one, if not both, of the parties is defrauded. One or both are led to expect certain benefits, limit their opportunities based on this expectation, and then are forced out of the deal. There was said to be a lawsuit in one of the Southern states where a jilted fiancée won a “breach of promise” suit based on unrevoked laws that still made engagements binding.⁸ Another prominent pastor walked three of his daughters through successful courtships, but before the wedding of the third the young man backed out of the marriage. Of course, according to the legal definition, the third daughter was defrauded. She was led to expect marriage from a young man who

was not bound to deliver it. She was deceived, lied to. The Bible speaks favorably of one who “swears to his own hurt, and does not change,” and prescribes sanctions against an unreliable word (*Ex. 20:15,16; Lev. 6:2; 19:13; Eph. 5:6*).

So, How Does This Work?

The trademark of a Biblical relationship is the place of the covenant. The covenant must be established before a one-on-one relationship (the path toward marriage) is cultivated. As demonstrated by the case of Rebecca (“Will you go?” [*Gen. 24:58*]), all the deciding parties must agree that the relationship is God’s will. The couple then enters into a covenant that will reach its consummation in marriage. The relationship from the point of betrothal is progressive: Betrothe, then “take,” as the Bible puts it (*Dt. 20:7*), not betrothe, then “decide.” Romantic inclinations are saved until God confirms that he has revealed the life-long spouse. It is interesting to note that Isaac *first* took Rebecca as his wife, and *then* loved her (*Gen. 24:67*). Biblical love is a commitment to obey God’s will, instead of mere emotion.

This is not the dreaded “arranged marriage,” with visions of meeting your single-toothed, beer-bellied intended an hour before the wedding. Rather, it is a two-tiered marriage institution: a way to rest secure in your relationship as you cultivate your emotions and prepare for your God-given calling. Scripture doesn’t specify all the purposes behind betrothal—only that it is a time of preparation prior to the physical union, during which the commitment to move on to marriage is irrevocable.

The Bible offers clear and strict standards for relationships. If we’re going to call it Biblical, we had better make sure that it is. If we’re going to pick on dating, we can’t do it with courtship. If we’re going to raise the standard, we must get it all the way up there.

¹ Paul Gladder, *The Courtship Covenant*, 1996.

² As cited in a publication from Fairfax Covenant Church, Fairfax, VA, 1998.

³ Jonathan Lindvall, “Bold Christian Living, Dating? Courtship? Betrothal?” *Scriptural Romance* 2, 1996.

⁴ As cited in *The Teaching Home*, December, 1986, Jonathan Lindvall, *Dating vs. Courtship*, 1996.

⁵ Jonathan Lindvall, *Youthful Romance: Scriptural Pattern*, 1997.

⁶ Jonathan Lindvall, “The Dangers of Dating,” *Scriptural Romance* 2, 1997.

⁷ Institute In Basic Life Principles, *Understanding the Biblical Foundations of Marriage*, 1988, 7, 10.

⁸ Jonathan Lindvall, “Dating? Courtship? Betrothal?”

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“Biblionomy as a Reformed Presupposition”

Audiocassettes of Andrew Sandlin’s lecture at Westminster Theological Seminary-West, with questions and answers, is now ready for mailing from Chalcedon. This lecture puts to rest the notion that theonomy is chiefly a matter of Biblical interpretation and argues, rather, that it springs from a consistently Reformed bibliology. It is a key statement in the theonomy debate. The total cost for both cassettes is \$8.00, including postage. Contact Chalcedon for your audiocassettes today.

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When Happily Ever After Isn't

By Susan Burns

The Problem



They did not care who saw them. Or maybe they did not know anyone else existed in the world. They stood a little too close, facing eye to eye, fingers intertwining fingers. Such into-you-ness can only speak of one thing: love. *Eros*, of course, not *phileo* or *agape* (not yet anyway). But *eros* isn't bad. I am sure

our First Parents felt the surge of pure, undefiled *eros* wash over them the moment they met. "Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," Adam said. Then sin entered, rebellion against the Holy Father ensued, and well, we all know the rest of the story. We live with its effects every day. If we want to be wise, we must balance this hard knowledge, this hard reality, with the strong desires we have that our children know the joy of being young and in love, young wives and husbands beginning that wonderful (we hope) ascent (not descent, we pray) into married life. And as we train and prepare them for that day aglow with such promises of bliss and the birth of a new generation, we must always keep in mind sin and the powers of evil that delight in destroying such holy possibilities.

The bitter truth is that some marriages will fail. Even during that time to come prophesied in Isaiah 65, some marriages will fail. Not many, thank God! What a joy to know that the scourge of my generation will pass! Sadly, there are parents reading this issue of the *Chalcedon Report* who will painstakingly seek marriage with a godly spouse for their children only to watch, in time, the union disintegrate to such a point that divorce is the only remedy. What pain and sorrow there will be. And tears. And questions—where did I go wrong, who is to blame? A lifetime of "what if's" and "if only's." Because of sin. We are sinners; we beget sinners. Sinners behave sinfully and sometimes rebellion and hardness of heart is such that the union crumbles. No, it should not be so. But it is the wage we reap and will continue to reap as this culture dies and the Bride of Christ refuses to obey her Lord.

The First Sign of Trouble

Cracks appear in the relationship. This is the normal consequence of sinners living together. My pastor, Robert

Jones of Hurricane Evangelical Free Church, says, "Don't be surprised when your children sin; plan on it!" It is that *plan* of godly action that can make or break your family. What do you do? How do you counsel your child? Where do you send him? Here are some hard pills to swallow. But you must be aware of these dangers so that your loved ones can avoid falling into and being destroyed by these terrible hellpits.

Today the probability of the church's being a help and offering godly counsel for you and yours during this time is quite slim. I feel like a traitor for saying it, but sadly it is true. The Biblical process of reconciliation (*Mt. 18*) is seldom practiced in churches. Those churches (particularly Reformed and Presbyterian) who attempt to implement this process do so as the first step in "church discipline"; it is used as an administrative procedure to clear the rolls of the errant instead of reclaiming the wayward sheep. For several years I watched a denomination that prides itself on being "Reformed" and "Bible-believing" ruin lives by this administrative approach. I have watched the broken-hearted go to their pastors and sessions for help only to be caught up in the grist mill of Matthew 18 misapplied. The broken-hearted, tender and vulnerable become even more deeply wounded. It is hard for hearts so wounded ever to trust the church again. And they fight gargantuan battles against personal bitterness toward God and the church—not to mention the impact this sorry witness has on friends and relatives who watch this abuse occur.

Fortunately, there are some churches that rightly apply Matthew 18. If you or your hurting child can get to one, GO! But before you do, be very careful to check out the pastor and the elders. Ask hard questions of them. Do not be afraid to. The life of your loved one is at stake. If at all possible, talk to church members who have had difficult situations handled by the session. It could make the difference between your child's living alone for the rest of his life or living reconciled with his spouse. I know a woman who did this. She moved to another city to be under the care of a session who had a reputation for godliness, understanding Matthew 18, and applying it in the lives of the congregation. Unfortunately, by the time she realized there was little truth to the advertising, it was too late. So check it out. What appears to be a Titan of the Faith may in reality be a Titanic! Take special care. Your loved ones are at stake.

In addition, be aware that as kind and as tenderhearted as a session may appear, your loved one's marital problem may be just one more thing for the session to deal with. Most pastors and elders will be busy attending session

meetings, committee meetings, preparing sermons or Sunday school lessons, oiling the wheel that creaks the loudest. No one but you will care that days, weeks, months are passing while the elders try to get around to you. I often counsel my friends that if they want the session's involvement, they need to create a crisis, such as telling them you are moving your membership. That is the one thing they will most likely respond to. It is sad that this technique works very well.

The only true motivation a session will have to expedite resolution of a sinful situation is its love for God and zeal for his honor. Without that, they move about as fast as molasses during a northeast January. Unfortunately, many elders today lack this zeal and love and appear terrified by conflict or even "potential" conflict. They refuse to gird their loins with the truth of orthodox Christianity, and prefer to sit as eunuchs in committee meetings waiting for someone to volunteer to make jello for yet another pot-luck. It is another sad consequence of the demasculinization of the church. Hearty, intact, Calvinistic elders seek the lost sheep and chase the enemy from the fold.

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Another sad reality is that ungodly sessions can be tar-babies; it can be very hard to get them off your back once they are involved. I have seen this scenario played out time after time: the unsuspecting, hurting, grieving individual goes to the pastor and elders seeking help. It becomes clear to the hurting one that the session—for whatever reason, ignorance of the Bible, lack of training, acceptance of ungodly philosophies, or plain stubbornness—is not applying and will not apply Biblical principles or teaching to the situation. The disappointed person humbly points this out to the session. Usually, the person making the truthful observation is declared stubborn and rebellious; charges are brought ("contumacy"), "adjudication," begins and the innocent person is disciplined, sometimes excommunicated—this in addition to still suffering from the problem that brought him to the session in the first place. Remember this fact: ungodly elders do not like to be told they are wrong.

So, bottom line—do not have great expectations of

today's church. I agree, it should not be this way. But that is how it is in the life of the church as we near the year 2000. The church is a mess today. If you naively, Bambi-eyed, take your troubles to her — watch out, you may be gunned down in cold blood. What a sad and terrible statement to make today that in 1998 we not only have to protect our children from a godless secular culture, we also often must protect them from the church.

A Godly Choice

As I said, there are some good churches out there, but they are the exception rather than the rule. I can't leave this topic without describing one. Before moving to California, I had the joyous privilege of being involved in a church whose pastor is an excellent, Biblical counselor. Talk about "if only's!" As I sat under the ministry of Pastor Robert Jones, I kept saying, "If only he had been available when this loved one or that loved one was facing a crisis!" Not only does he counsel; he teaches his congregation to do the same—not in a formal setting, but in the day-to-day situations that they face with family and friends. Under this kind of discipleship, the church develops elders who are equipped to rightly apply the word in the lives of the members as well as members who are trained to rightly apply the word in their lives and the lives of their loved ones. This is the way it is supposed to be: Matthew 18 is a part of church life—not the bastard child of administrative erasure, but the life-giving, peace-making Matthew 18 spoken by Christ to his disciples. This is the kind of church to which you must flee. Unfortunately, they are too few. So, I beg of you, heed my earlier warnings and precautions.

Another Godly Choice

If such a church is not available, where can you go, what can you do? Biblical counseling is another option. Still, you must look carefully and examine carefully the theology and approach which the counselor takes. I have friends who have been very disappointed to find that counselors who claim to be "nouthetic" and believers in orthodox Christianity and the Reformed Faith actually do not use the sound Biblical counseling techniques taught by these schools of counseling. The good news here is that if you involve yourself with a counselor and are disappointed, you can usually sever the relationship without fear of being excommunicated.

Fortunately, there are some fine counseling options. Once again, through my pastor, I became aware of the ministry of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation. I had the privilege of attending a "Changing Lives Seminar" taught by David Powlison and Paul Tripp. I strongly recommend these seminars. Go, take your family. It will do you much more good than a trip to Disney World. This organization offers the kind of reconciliation ministry that can help you and your loved ones as they face a crisis. I hope to highlight their ministry in an upcoming *Report*. In the meantime, if you want more

information, contact them at 1803 East Willow Grove Avenue, Glenside, PA 19083 (215)884-7676.

An axiom of us recons is “strong families, strong churches”; and that is true. When families are weak, tearing apart and breaking up, something has to be done to repair the breach and strengthen the wall. I believe that the methods I have learned through my pastor, David Powlison and Paul Tripp offer the best Biblical solution we have available today. The wonderful news is that the training is available and you do not have to be an elder to take it or to use it to minister to your family and friends. By taking advantage of this training, both families and the church will be strengthened and begin to function as God desires.

The modern church and our secular culture have done a pretty complete job of destroying the foundation necessary to promote healthy, strong families. So I am very grateful for the Biblical foundation being laid by godly men line upon line and precept upon precept. I am grateful for the ministry of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation. I am grateful that I have had the privilege of seeing and participating in a church that tries to honor God in difficult situations. I am grateful for the men of Chalcedon who seek to apply Biblical teaching to issues like courtship and dating and family worship, and who seek to teach others these principles. Solid teaching and training like this will begin to turn the tide in families, the church and culture. I urge you to lay hold of it, implement the principles in your family now. An old saying goes, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” In our day, as we prepare our children for marriage, I think it should be said, “Five pounds of prevention is worth a lifetime of heartache.”

Nothing Works

And what if, having done all you can do, divorce still comes for you or a child—with its searing pain, embarrassment, tears, rage at injustice, the bitterness, humiliation, loneliness, sheer terror, horror of it all? What then? Well, you can continue to lie there wallowing in a pool of your own blood, or you can take the hand of your loving Savior and be lifted up, bathed in his comfort, strengthened by his Holy Word and move on. Praise God that, even for this, there is a balm in Gilead! Christ is the balm of Gilead and he promises to comfort our hurts and sorrows. And when the question roars through your mind: WHY? WHY? WHY? Remember the truth of Romans 8:28 and be comforted that this occurred that you might be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, who himself learned from the things he suffered. Learn from your suffering and teach what you learn to your children so that the next generation can avoid the snares laid down by the Evil One.

If you have children, train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as he commands. Confess your sins to them. Do not be afraid to let them see the agony your divorce has caused you. Seeing burned flesh can

deter a hand from going willingly into the fire. Seeing the pain of the healing process can result in more prayerful choices about their future. Do not be afraid to call sin, sin or wickedness, wickedness. And if it is sin and wickedness on the part of a rebellious parent, name it for your children. I know this is a very unpopular concept today. Today we honor the rebellious parent no matter how wicked he is. It is very common for divorce orders to incorporate language prohibiting either spouse from speaking ill of the other. Whereas there is some wisdom in this, if a parent has abandoned his family or committed adultery, the children need to be taught that this is evil and wicked. It is so evil that in God’s law, the penalty for such behavior is death.

Give your lambs the training they need through home schooling, Christian schooling and a sound church environment. Do not fool yourselves that they are not being ill-influenced by that pig-slop preaching they pretend to ignore every Sunday. Wait a few years and you will see how deadly that poison is. Calvinistic preaching and teaching is good food that will help grow boys and girls into strong, godly men and women. By giving your children a very strong foundation, you will be paving the way for God’s blessings on them and the next generation of your family. You will be increasing their ability to make God-honoring choices.

Do not despair. You may go through life without a spouse, but you still have your children and a future.

What if you have no spouse and no children? Then, like our brother Paul (divorced or widowed, we do not know) we can serve the Lord with a singleness of devotion (*1 Cor. 7:32-33*). We serve a King who will never leave nor forsake us (*Heb. 13:5*). As important and primal as the covenant of marriage is in God’s economy, in heaven there will be only one Bride and one Groom (*Mt. 22:30*). There is still a heritage for those who have neither spouse nor children (*Is. 56:1ff*).

Conclusion

Divorce is a terrible remedy for horrible sin. That it is so common today (and often without Biblical warrant) is symptomatic of how dead our culture is. Once again, the church of our day has not responded well to the needs of families. As a result, an entire generation has been raised not knowing how to establish a Christian home or how to solve problems when they arise between husband and wife or parent and child. But by God’s grace, there are those who are pointing the way out of the desert of broken dreams.

Susan Burns is a native Virginian and graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary. Her work has been published in over 25 publications. She co-authored (with George Grant) Perot: The Populist Appeal of Strong-Man Politics and served as the news editor and investigative reporter of The Presbyterian Advocate. She is Chalcedon’s administrative assistant.

Urban Nations Update: Onward Christian Citizens!

By Rev. Steve M. Schlissel

By the grace of God, and with gratitude to you, the Urban Nations core program—Teaching English as a Second Language using the Bible as the text—is well established. In addition to ministering to immigrants in this way at two New York City locations, we have been privileged to assist others in instituting similar programs in Arkansas, California, Minnesota, and Washington. We have also exported the program to Latvia and are exploring the viability of helping committed Christians in Nicaragua and Malaysia to use this means of bringing the gospel to people in these respective locations who are interested in learning English.

We are now expanding the Urban Nations program to include classes to prepare immigrants for American citizenship. Such programs are offered by many organizations, all of whose mouths are firmly latched to the Federal breast. Urban Nations gets its funding from God's people, however, and is therefore free to set up a program which offers something rather unique: the truth! Federally funded programs prepare immigrants to answer the rather simple questions which comprise the test accepted by the Immigration and Natural Service. Urban Nations' program will do that, too. In fact, we'll guarantee that every student who attends all classes and does the homework assignments will pass the test. But we aim to do a whole lot more. We want our students to know America's Christian history.

Political correctness has resulted in a society-wide case of collective amnesia. Our Christian roots have been pulled out of all public school and college textbooks, and any reference to our beginnings in faith has been utterly banned in popular media.

It has fallen to the church, therefore, to let the facts be known. Thus, we have a grand opportunity to tell America's newest citizens what they will hear from no other source. For where will they learn of the Christian Faith which compelled Christopher Columbus in his journeys? Where will they hear the truth about the Puritans? Where will they learn of the Christian consensus which made possible the following, excerpted from a proclamation of President John Adams on March 23, 1798:¹

... the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection and the blessing of Almighty God.

That he was referring to the Triune God of Scripture is soon made clear:

I have therefore thought fit to recommend, and I do hereby recommend, that Wednesday, the 9th day of May next, be observed throughout the United States as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer; that the citizens of these States, abstaining on that day from their customary worldly occupations, offer their devout addresses to the Father of Mercies agreeably to those forms or methods which they have severally adopted as the most suitable and becoming; that all religious congregations do, with the deepest humility, acknowledge before God the manifold sins and transgressions with which we are justly chargeable as individuals and as a nation, beseeching Him at the same time, of His infinite grace, through the Redeemer of the World, freely to remit all our offenses, and to incline us by His Holy Spirit to that sincere repentance and reformation which may afford us reason to hope for his inestimable favor and heavenly benediction....

They'll learn from other sources that Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty or give me death!" But who will tell them that this five-time governor of Virginia also declared, "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here?"

Who will tell our immigrant friends what modern America makes almost unimaginable, that the Supreme Court, in 1892, said, "Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise; and in this sense and to this extent our civilizations and our institutions are emphatically Christian."

Just a few years ago, when the governor of Mississippi had the temerity to utter the same sentiment, the *New York Times* and its partners in humanistic elitism went ballistic!

Surely the massive wave of immigration we are witnessing today requires that churches aggressively seek to make those new to our shores aware of our glorious heritage. Therefore, we approach this new phase of our ministry as a solemn obligation, to prepare immigrants not simply to pass a test so as to become citizens, but to see themselves as beneficiaries of an unmatched Christian history, and to take their places, if God be so pleased, as Christian citizens.

Anybody can help them to become citizens. God alone can make them *Christian* citizens. But they need

the truth if that is to come to pass. May God enable us to deliver it to them.

Please, as you continue to support us financially, support us, too, in prayer to God Almighty, that he who has done such wonders for America before would be pleased to raise up from these immigrants a generation that knows, embraces, and exults in our Christian history. Amen.

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¹ My thanks to Garry Moes for bringing this quote to my attention.

POSITION PAPER No. 224

Reality

By R. J. Rushdoony

Man's lust for autonomy is insatiable. He wants no God who can make a claim on him. In fact, Marcel Duchamp, having redefined art, sought in retirement to create a new language without reference to God, propositional truth, or meaning. The newer dictionaries have weakened definitions by rejecting established and historic meaning and grammar in favor of anti-order urges.

Certainly, redefining *reality* is high among autonomous man's priorities, at least on the intellectual and philosophical levels. The Death of God school of thought re-defined the Biblical God as dead because he did not fit into their world, *i.e.*, the physical universe. By doing this, they committed suicide as thinkers. After all, scholastic or academic chairs in religion are commonly funded in universities (where they exist at all), in colleges, and seminaries by the ecclesiastical community; and the thinking of this school of thought would have put such academic areas out of business. Now the Death of God school did not say "God is dead," but, "God is dead for us because he is outside reality as we know it." Their position was clearly Kantian.

Klaas Runia well described the current view of reality:

For modern man, who knows only one reality, namely this universe, there is only one way of thinking and speaking of God; not in terms of height but of depth. God is the ground of our being and of all that is; yes, he is being itself. (Klaas Runia: *The Present-day Christological Debate*, 26. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984).

With such a definition of God, theologians and philosophers can, to the end of time, say what they please about God in the self-assurance that he can never

contradict them because he cannot speak! Their own speaking, in their view, is as much God's as man's, or more so.

The real world is this world. Most important in this real world is rationality. Reason incarnates itself, as it were, in experience, and that which does not so realize itself is nothing. The rational experience and reality are coextensive, and this is what God's is: God is real because he is a part of any and all reality, but it is the whole that is real. The incarnation of God and man was for Hegel very important in terms of his perspective, but it was better realized in the Prussian state of his day with its union of state, religion, reason, and more. In a very important sense, for the Hegelian, the death of the Christian God was the birth of reason.

For Auguste Comte, God had to go, for otherwise man would not attain a fully rational society. With God, religious concerns would govern man, whereas without God, rational and political concerns would control him. Without God, man would devote himself to humanistic goals and tasks.

How we define *reality* is thus very important. Unless the Triune God of Scripture is the source of our definition, we will logically gravitate to a definition that in time will eliminate God because it begins with man. According to Etienne Borne, basic to atheism is the premise, "There is no God, therefore I am" (Etienne Borne: *Atheism*, 35. New York, NY.: Hawthorn Books, 1961).

The definition of reality in philosophy from Descartes to the present has been in terms of this world, and, more specifically, the mind of man. "I think; therefore, I am" means that reality is in essence man and man's mind, in particular man's rationality. Reality for modern man does not stray far from his rationality.

Van Til has pointed out that “The non-Christian idea of faith is faith in reality which is partly incomprehensible to him. The Christian idea of faith is the acceptance by the creature (and now, since the Fall, the sinner) of God’s plan set forth in Scripture” (Cornelius Van Til: *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 57. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1954).

For fallen man, he is himself the basic reality because he is his own god (*Gen. 3:5*). As a result, he radically warps his perception of what reality is because to do otherwise means to acknowledge that he is a sinner in need of judgment. He is ready to raise metaphysical questions in order to obscure the moral ones. But all such attempts are failures. Because man is a creature, he can never sever the law-tie to his Creator.

Random Notes

By R. J. Rushdoony

1. Chambord, a castle in the Loire region of France, was build for King Francis I. It contained 440 rooms, 80 staircases, 365 fireplaces, and about 13,750 acres of gardens and carefully tended grounds, with stocked game within the 20 or so miles of the boundary walls. Francis I, who prided himself on his correct manners, was, however, by no means a faithful husband. Was it because he had trouble finding the queen’s bedroom in that jungle of rooms?

2. The historian, Louis B. Wright, wrote a delightful account of his boyhood in *Barefoot in Arcadia* (1974). He tells the story of one South Carolina physician, Dr. McLeod. A patient who had not paid his bill swore at the doctor for dunning him for payment. The angry doctor grabbed his revolver and chased him down the street, firing at him every few feet. So Dr. McLeod ran past a stranger and snatched the man’s hat and put it on his own head. In his trial for assault and battery, the puzzled judge asked, “Dr. McLeod, will you tell the court why you snatched the stranger’s hat?” Dr. McLeod answered, “Your honor, I left my office hurriedly and was without my hat, and no gentleman likes to be conspicuous in public” (p. 148). In those days, a gentleman never forgot he was a gentleman!

3. Psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce, in a 1973 speech at a Childhood International Education Seminar, said, “Every child in America entering school at the age of 5 is mentally ill because he comes to school with certain allegiances to our founding fathers, toward elected officials, toward his parents, toward belief in a supernatural being. . . . It’s up to you as teachers to make all these sick children well—by creating an international child of the future” (Dr. Thomas Roder, Volker Jubilbers, Anthony Burwell: *Psychiatrists, The Man Behind Hitler* [Los Angels, California: Freedom Publishing, 1995], 306).

4. Another choice item from Louis B. Wright’s *Barefoot in Arcadia* is about the storekeeper’s cat. It was run over by a wagon, leaving some new-born and blind kittens. To keep them warm for the time being, the storekeeper put the kittens under a setting hen. While filling an order for a boy sent there by his mother, he asked the boy to check on the hen. When the boy returned, the storekeeper asked, “Well, son, what do you think of the hen’s brood?” The boy replied, “Didn’t think much, but I know one thing. I done et my last egg” (p. 160).

5. Amazing, how rapidly things change! My early years on the farm were horse and buddy days, and then came the Model T Ford years. One of the happy memories of those times was the hand-muffs that women used in the winters. On a wintry night, in a buggy or an open touring car, it was a very good feeling to slip one’s hands into the muff my mother carried.

Another memory is of button hooks; some were quite ornate and attractive. A child’s shoes then, and some adult footwear also, were buttoned-hooked.

Then, as high school students, girls wore their hair in snoods, which made their hair neat and more attractive. Snoods were nets for long hair.

6. Occasionally, I enjoy browsing in or reading a book on the history of foods. Some interesting facts about the history of gourmet cooking emerge. First, a major reason for the development of excellent sauces and recipes was the lack, in much of history, of refrigeration. Expert chefs covered the taste of over-aging meats with superb sauces. Second, many foods, vegetables in the main, were prepared and served very tastefully because it was believed they were aphrodisiacs. Men ate them in the belief that it would stimulate their sexual prowess, and women served them to husbands or lovers with the same hope.

I wonder, was that argument ever used on boys, "Eat your vegetables, Bobby, so your wife, when you grow up and marry, won't be disappointed by you!"

An older book I just read, George Lang's *Compendium of Culinary Nonsense and Trivia*, lists many recipes for making vegetables more appealing, in by-gone years, to men.

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7. An interesting comment in Kai-fu Tsao's *The Relationship Between Scholars and Rulers in Imperial China* (1984) concerns the United States. The author saw the U. S., and its break with Britain, as the work of scholars like Samuel Adams, James Otis, and others. Otis wrote a treatise on Latin and Greek prosody. Men like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and John Quincy Adams were

learned men, masters of political theory, with an extensive knowledge of history (p. 184f.). In that era, the U. S. "was led by scholars." Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "brain trust" was a brief harkening back to this early emphasis.

8. In 1924, the average American income was \$2,196; a new car cost \$265; a loaf of bread was 9 cents; a gallon of gas was 11 cents and a gallon of milk (not quart) was 54 cents. We were then still on the gold standard. Calvin Coolidge was then president. Ten years later, in 1934, the Depression was under way, and the average income was \$1,601; a new car was \$625; a loaf of bread was 8 cents; a gallon of gas was 10 cents; and a gallon of milk was 45 cents. I recall, in 1933 during a "gas price war," one service station that offered ten gallons of gas free with an oil change and a lubrication job.

9. A few years ago, John H. Schaar, in an essay on "Power and Purity" (*American Review* 19, p. 166n.), observed in a footnote of Hegel's maxim, "A hero is never a hero to his valet"—not because the hero is not a hero, but because the valet is a valet." Little men belittle everything.

10. As the 20th century nears its finish, it is interesting to remember (or to reread in century-old magazines) that people a century ago *rightly* expected all kinds of remarkable inventions to mark the era, but *wrongly* expected that man's inner problems and failings would be solved thereby. The expected century of progress became the bloodiest century of history with the rise of new and worse tyrannies, great wars, famines, slave labor camps, mass murders, and the like. Without religious and moral progress, advancing technologies only give evil men more scope in their powers.

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Daddy's Girl: Courtship and a Father's Rights

By Sarah Faith Schlissel



I've been Daddy's girl from Day One. My first word was "Dada." I've always wanted to do what Daddy was doing, go where Daddy was going, read what Daddy was reading, say what Daddy was saying. We have the same sense of humor, preferences, pet peeves, strengths and weaknesses—even the same

allergies. Little wonder people call me "Daddy's Little Clone." I mean, take a look at the picture heading this column! No wonder that, for fairness' sake, in family votes, our two are counted as one.

But does this exhaust the ways in which I might be reckoned "Daddy's girl"? Beyond being an X-chromosome donor, may we think of the "-s" in "Daddy's" in the possessive sense, and affirm with legitimacy that Daddy is my *owner*? That "my heart belongs to Daddy" is certainly true. But do daughters, *per se*, belong to their Daddies?

The answer to this question will bring us the answer to the propriety of courtship as a model for a daughter's pre-marriage relationship with a prospective suitor. For the crux of the courtship question is not empirical, but principal. I define courtship as the discovery of a life-partner for a daughter under the direct oversight of the father. Any man seeking to beg, borrow or steal a daughter's hand without her father's endorsement is seeking to gain, in unlawful ways, "property" not his own. Daughters are Daddy's girls in the objective sense, and this particular daughter rejoices in that truth. I am owned by my father. If someone is interested in me, he should see *him*.

This might sound harsh. "Ownership" makes some cringe. Okay, okay. So call it "authoritative stewardship." But for many, this is not much better. "What are you talking about? This courtship stuff may be nice (up to a point), and I agree that dating is unwise, riddled as it is with temptations—but hold it a minute there, sister! Are you saying that you're just a piece of property? How could you think of yourself in those terms? You need some serious help with your self-esteem there! Get real! Get with it! This is the 90s!"

Yes, it is grating to our ears. However, let's not dismiss the idea without examining its merits. The Christian worldview, informed by Scripture, functions as our spectacles. Through the Bible, we see the world as it is; and no part of life is exempt from God's governance. We want to live in accord with his law even if it means living

in (uncomfortable) opposition to popular culture. Everyone committed to advancing God's kingdom must be prepared to live against the norms of unbelief. Culture and custom which begin with God's word will inescapably conflict with culture which begins with the word of man.

And the word of God teaches that progenitors have certain rights. Let's use that as our major premise and construct a syllogism. Major premise: The creator of something is sovereign over that which he created. Minor premise: God created all things. Conclusion: God is sovereign over all things. This agrees with Scripture: "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it, for [*i.e., because*] He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers" (*Ps. 24:1*). God created it; therefore, he has full authority over it.

This same truth is variously expressed in Scripture: "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own. . . ?" (*Mt. 20:15*). The potter (*Rom. 9:21*) has a right to do with his creations as he sees fit. Put another way, to generate something is to have an implicit sovereignty over it. We happily concede the fact that human ownership is always second order ownership *under* God, the only absolute Sovereign. Nevertheless, God has made explicit his will that parents, as the immediate generative source of individuals, are to be revered for that very fact, and the rights of parents are to be honored, by children and society. (It is not to be wondered at that our generation speaks only of women's rights and children's rights, whereas the Scripture speaks of God's rights and parents' rights.)

I don't feel qualified to discuss the role of sons, but it seems clear that there is a peculiar relationship between the father and the daughter. Since a daughter is, by the grace of God, always under authority—there being a transfer at marriage from a father's to a husband's—daughters are "Daddy's" uniquely. While he must raise his sons to be loving husbands and fathers who make houses possible, he raises his daughters to be submissive, godly wives and wise mothers, to make houses homes. He raises a son to be a provider; he raises a daughter to be provided for.

Proud independence is no noble goal for a woman, and the spirit which pursues it is no part of a godly girl's trousseau. Of course, those who exalt independence, denying headship to a husband, will certainly deny it to a father. Thus, they find the idea of courtship offensive. But those who acknowledge that God's way is right (*Lk. 7:29, 35*) find the idea of "authoritative stewardship" quite pleasant!

The very first question of the Heidelberg Catechism is this: *What is your only comfort in life and in death?* The answer is matchless: *That I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful savior Jesus Christ.* Sinners find this answer repulsive. "Not my own?"

That's no comfort! That means I can't do what I want!"

Well now, isn't that the whole issue? We don't want to feel like we're owned, because we want to do what we want to do. It's as simple as that. We know that whoever owns us has authority to determine our comings and goings, and each of us wants to be his own boss. It is thus no wonder that sinners cringe at the concepts involved in courtship.

But saints are those who are obliged to come to terms with authority structures which come from the hand of God. And because earthly authorities are themselves under God's authority, we acknowledge that no daughter is obliged to obey commands *from any source* bidding her to sin. Yet some would seek to use this concession by arguing, "What if God tells the girl to do something that her father doesn't approve of? What if, for example, the LORD reveals to her, through various signs and feelings, that she is to marry a particular man? Wouldn't God's will for the girl supersede her earthly, mortal, imperfect father's will?"

Simply put: No. As strange as it may sound, in the peculiar relationship of the father and daughter, God, as it were, takes a back seat. God has created a hierarchy such that the daughter is directly answerable to her father, and her **father** then answers to God. This doubles the father's responsibilities, because he must account to God for the way he raises his daughter.

The father's ownership, of course, is an *in order to* thing. God has given the daughter to the father so he can raise her in the fear and admonition of the Lord, protect her from harm and want, protect her from other men, and sometimes, protect her from herself, even from foolish decisions she might make on her own.

Numbers 30 provides help in understanding God's view of the father/daughter relationship. "If a woman makes a vow to the Lord, and binds herself by an obligation, in her father's house, in her youth, and her father hears her vow and her obligation by which she has bound herself, and says nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand, and every obligation by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if her father should forbid her on the day he hears of it, none of her vows or her obligations by which she has bound herself shall stand, *and the Lord will forgive her because her father had forbidden her.*"

In that scenario, a daughter has solemnly promised something to the Most High God, who has no superior. The father then hears of this vow, and on the day he hears of it, forbids her, saying, "No, Miriam, you may *not* do temple service on the 15th of Adar; we have to visit our relatives in Be'er Sheva that weekend." And the LORD will forgive her because her father had forbidden her. So much, then, for "God told me to disobey you, Daddy." Throughout Scripture, daughters are given in marriage; they do not give themselves and they may not be taken.

If we're understanding this properly, just think of the impact it has on courtship. In modern "dating," the girl is seen as belonging to herself. Therefore, it's a logical conclusion that any man who wants to be romantically involved with her has only to ask *her* permission. But if it's true that the father owns (has lawful authoritative stewardship rights over) his daughter, then the young man

must seek *the father's* approval. It's not simply up to the girl. This changes the tone of any relationship there might be. If it's the father who must give his approval, the young man knows that he is being watched, and he has to *prove* himself worthy. God has given fathers a lot of insight into the character, impulses and designs of young men. Flowers and sweet words might win the daughter; but Daddy's a man, and it's a lot harder to pass Daddy's tests. Further, a godly father is aware of his daughter's capabilities and needs, and can often see more clearly than she whether a young man is a complement to her and whether she can aid him in his calling. The order of God, as indicated in his word, is that God himself defers to the will of the father when it comes to his daughter. God says, "You heard your father. The answer is no." **Thus, the will of the father regarding his daughter IS the will of God.**

So I really am "Daddy's girl." And no man can approach me as an independent agent because I am not my own, but belong, until my marriage, to my father. At the time of my marriage, my father gives me away to my husband and there is a lawful change of ownership. At that point and at that point only, I am no longer bound to do my father's will. Instead, I must answer to my husband. If you read the rest of Numbers 30 you will see that this is the case. Notice that there is no intermediate point between Daddy and Hubby. There is no "limbo land" where the girl is free to gallivant on her own, "discovering herself" as she walks in fields of gold, apart from any defining covenant head, doing whatever she sees fit.

You might not sneeze in sync with your Dad, or laugh at the same jokes. Maybe you're exactly like your Mom, or an even mix of both your parents. Whatever the case, I hope you see that *objectively*, you are no less of a Daddy's girl than I am. My responsibility as a daughter is simple: to do the will of my father on earth, and in so doing, to do the will of my Father in Heaven. Courtship is but one instance where the rubber of Scripture meets the road of life.

Sarah Faith Schlissel, 19, is pursuing her MBA at Pace University in New York while working full-time as an analyst at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter. She is the administrator of The Courtship Ring, an Internet ministry of Messiah's Congregation (write to SFSchliss@aol.com for info). Prospective suitors with \$100,000 or more on hand may contact her Daddy.



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GENE EDWARD VEITH, JR. is professor of humanities and Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, Wisconsin. His books include *A Christian Guide to Literature* and *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. His articles appear in *World* and other publications. He will be speaking on cultural issues from a Christian perspective.

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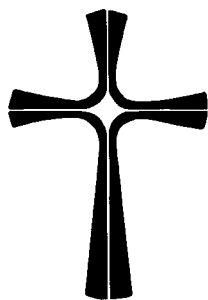
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