

Obey God's Word



God is a Matchmaker (Part 6)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living, which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

This week I am continuing with my theme from last week, "God Is a Matchmaker," a theme which unfolds God's plan for marriage and how you can fit in with it.

In my talks last week I established the fact that in His teaching on marriage, Jesus went right back to God's purpose in creation. He refused to accept any lower standard. He always began His answer with the phrase, "In the beginning," and for any Jew in that time, that was a direct reference to the book of Genesis, for the Hebrew name for the book of Genesis is "in the beginning." So that's where Jesus went for His teachings and His standard of marriage.

In the pattern for marriage set by God in creation, we find four successive phases. First, marriage was God's decision, not Adam's. The initiative came from God. Second, God formed Eve for Adam. He accepted that responsibility. Third, God brought Eve to Adam. Adam did not have to wander around looking for his chosen helpmeet. And fourth, God established the terms of their relationship. And the purpose of their relationship was unity. The two should become one flesh.

Now it's my conviction that all these four principles still apply today in the outworking of God's purpose for marriage in our lives. In two of my talks last week, I shared with you how these principles worked out in my own life in both my first and my second marriage. Let me briefly restate the principles before we go further.

First, marriage should be God's decision, not man's. The initiative is with God. Second, God forms the woman for the man. It's His responsibility. Third, God brings the woman to the man and fourth, God establishes the terms of their relationship.

Now, this week I'm going to share with you further practical lessons that I've learned both from Scripture and in my own personal experience. I'm going to show you how you can

apply these biblical principles for marriage in your own life.

First of all, I'd like to give you two key verses from Proverbs, both of which speak about God's provision of a wife. Proverbs 18:22:

> "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." (NASB)

To me, that verse indicates that in a certain sense we are dependent on the Lord's favor for the choice of the right helpmeet. We cannot simply trust our own judgment. But if we are walking in the favor of God, then He will see to it that we find the kind of wife or the kind of husband that we need.

And then in Proverbs 19:14:

> "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." (NASB)

Again the suggestion is that in the area of choosing the right helpmeet, we have to have God's help. It's God's favor, it's God's provision that we must rely upon. We cannot rely merely on our own judgment or our own efforts. I'm interested in that word in Proverbs 19:14, the word "prudent." I've checked with various modern translations and all of them use the same word, "prudent." It's rather an interesting word; it's not a very common word in contemporary English, but it has very clear meaning: a woman of intelligence, of practical wisdom, a woman to whom things can be committed and she can do them with responsibility. It's a very embracing word and it means a great deal to me because, as I've indicated already, I've been married twice and each time my wife came to me from the Lord and each time, I would have to say if there's one word that really describes my wife, it's prudent. And I tell you it's a blessing to live with a prudent woman.

I'd also say that any man who has a prudent wife is very foolish if he doesn't consult her. I shared all my major decisions with both my first wife and now with my second. In the last resort, I believe as head of the family I held the ultimate responsibility for the decisions made, but I always invited the counsel of my wife and never do I, with any kind of self-assertive confidence, go flat in the face of my wife's opinion or counsel. I believe if God has given you a prudent wife, you're foolish if you don't avail yourself of her prudence.

Now, having just looked at those two verses from Proverbs, I want to go on to a general principle of guidance which applies in this and in every situation in which a believer needs guidance. There are two kinds of guidance in the Christian life, general guidance and special guidance. General guidance is guidance that applies to all believers at all times. It's based on principle. Special guidance is guidance that God gives to a believer in a certain situation which might not apply to another believer, even in the same situation.

Now, general guidance comes to us primarily from one source and that source is the Scripture. What I want to say today is, we have no right to expect special guidance if we reject general guidance. We can only qualify for special guidance if we are walking in the light of the guidance that God has made available to us through the Scripture. And in Psalm 119 verse 105, the psalmist says this to the Lord:

> "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (NIV)

What do we walk with? We walk with feet. What do we walk on? We walk on a path. God's Word provides light both for our feet and our path. It does not always illuminate the distant scene, but it means that if we walk in obedience to the Word of God, as it applies to our lives in any situation, we will never be in complete darkness. We will always have enough light to see the next step that we need to take. And that's all that faith demands. But if we reject the light of God's Word, then we have no right to go to God in some circumstances and ask for special guidance. If we ignore the principles of God's Word about marriage, we have no right to expect God to guide us specifically in a given situation as to whom to marry. General guidance comes before special guidance and general guidance comes from the Word of God, the Scripture.

Now I'm going to apply the general guidance of Scripture to the particular subject that I'm speaking about today, the choice of a helpmeet, a marriage mate. The Bible has certain very clear principles laid down. The first and the most important and one which unfortunately believers often overlook to their own sorrow, is that a true believer has no right to marry an unbeliever. It's not even right to consider such a union. It's outside the will of God. Anybody who does that is not walking in the light of Scripture. This is what Paul says about this in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14–16. He's speaking to believers.

> "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." (NIV)

The word "yoke" all through the Bible primarily indicates a marriage relationship, but can also cover other relationships.

> "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers, for what do righteousness and wickedness have in common, or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial [or the Devil]? What

> does a believer have in common with an unbeliever, what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols, for we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people.'"

So there is a clear ray of light for our path from the Scripture. If we can't see anything else, we can see this, that in any situation where a believer is free to make a choice, it is wrong for a believer to choose marriage with an unbeliever. And I want to say that, in this respect, we need to have this principle established before we get emotionally involved. Remember I have raised, or helped to raise, eleven daughters, so I have some experience. I've seen that when a young woman gets emotionally involved with a young man, her judgment is no longer reliable. And she can easily persuade herself that the man she's marrying is really a believer, even though the fruit isn't there. Jesus said the tree is known by it's fruit. Don't accept merely a person's statement that he or she is a believer; look at that person's life and see what kind of fruit comes out of it. I would say this, that if the person has just recently professed faith in Jesus Christ, conversion to the Lord, it takes time for the reality of that conversion to be proved. In my long experience in pastoral ministry, I would say it's rash to assume the real, final commitment of any believer before a time of about two years.

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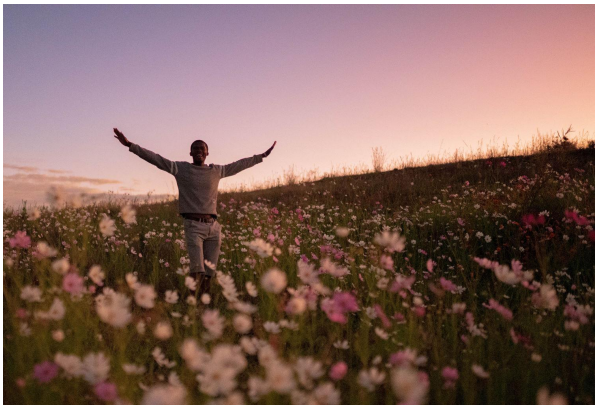
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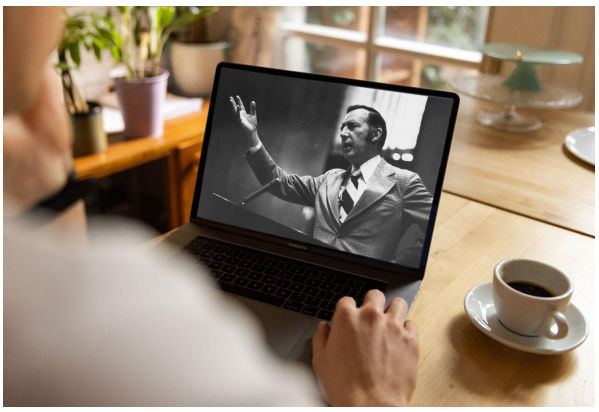
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