

A Culture for Courtship – Gen 2:18-25, Prov 30:18-19

Introduction – Sermons have been given, books have been read, and head-nods have been made to the concept of Biblical Courtship in our midst. But there remains the need to develop a culture of covenant faithfulness in marriage and family in and among our people. And so, as Paul said in regards to another issue, “*For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*” Paul needed to continue to repeat his instructions because of the constant swirl of false-teaching. So do we when it comes to understanding the role of men and women in establishing covenant households. Parents need to understand and seek to cultivate a culture of personal responsibility and anti-individualism in their home as early as possible; a place where the concept of marrying and giving in marriage (Matt 24:38, Psalm 78:63) is the norm and where fathers take responsibility for their daughter’s virginity and sexual protection (Deut 22:13-21, 2 Cor 11:1-3). Children need to understand when they are under their parents’ authority, when and how they leave that authority, and the differences between sons and daughters in this. As Paul feared for the Corinthian church, so I fear for the teenagers and young adults in our midst, “*as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the purity that is in Christ.*” There is much temptation at every turn, and so much perversion in our land and in our churches. Marriages and families are destroyed all around. We must think biblically together.

Man Alone (Gen 2:18-25) – At the heart of marriage and family issues is this truth: it is not good that man should be alone. Marriage was established by God, not men, and for His purposes, not our fickle notions. His purposes are basically these: companionship in culture-building (Gen 2:18), godly children (Mal 2:15), and sexual fidelity (Heb 13:4, 1 Cor 7:2).

The First Courtship – God showed Adam his need for a wife (Gen 2:18-20). He then caused Adam to “die” in his inadequacy and then “resurrected” him to a new life (v21). He broke Adam in two, fashioned for Adam a woman, and brought her to Adam (v22). God gave Eve away in the first wedding ceremony. Adam wrote the first recorded love poem that day. He also celebrated his authority and responsibility over his wife by naming her *Ishshah* (Woman).

Patterns (vv24-25) – Quoted and applied throughout the Bible (i.e. Matt 19:5, 1 Tim 3:2), this is God’s pattern for creating new covenant families. A man leaves and a woman is given. There is a public acknowledgment of a private sexual union; marriage is a sexual and intimate union in the midst of covenantal vows of faithfulness. It is so important to note here that sex is not anti-religious but rather a glorious gift from God. Rather, sexual perversion, fornication, and all sexual relations outside of the covenantal protection of marriage (biblically defined) is what is a sin. One can see the need to follow biblical patterns and definitions in standing against, for instance, homosexuality. But in order to do so, we have to submit to all of Scripture’s commands and patterns regarding the establishment of biblical marriage. If John and Bruce are “dating” this should bother us, but far too often the kind of “dating” that John and Sally are doing should bother us just as much. What is John thinking, we should ask, and where is Sally’s father?

Establishing a Culture in the Home – Reacting to pagan worldviews and practices is not the same thing as building a godly culture in the home. Strong families have their own culture in the home, they are all built upon the same biblical principles, but they are each as different as their last names. Each one has its own language, customs, rituals, and unspoken assumptions. In order that we not simply fall into the cultural norms around us, nor react without thoughtfulness, we must allow the Word of God to shape how we develop these family cultures.

Two Problems – The first problem occurs when there is a culture established in the Christian home but it is a rebellious culture, because of unconfessed sin and bitterness residing in the home. If we are going to think covenantally, we have to admit that the godliness of our marriage-relationship has a direct impact and influence upon our children regardless of how young the children are and regardless of how much we think we have hidden from them.

The second problem occurs when we fall into the temptation of forgetting the family is a culture and allowing the unbelieving culture around us to affect the way our children are shaped in our homes.

Cultivating a Biblical Culture (Prov 30:18-19) – Boys and girls will become men and women and their relationship towards one another is a wonder, a mystery, and it is good. But we have to fight the rebellious culture and what it has done with this mystery. There are generations of recovery ahead of us and we must pray for repentance, reformation, and revival in our land. We must turn back to the practice of covenant headship in the family, preparing our sons and daughters to pursue and be given in marriage.

Forgiveness and Transformation (1 Cor 6:9-11) – For many of us, thinking about this, let alone practicing it, is incredibly foreign to us. Our own sexual past, and related relational train-wrecks, can make us lose hope. For your own life, for your own family, grace is the beginning and end of all that will bring transformation. Never forget from whence you have come and let us always welcome others into our midst based upon the grace of our Lord Jesus and not upon their past.

Not Marriage Alone, But the Process As Well (Eph 5:31-32) – If marriage is established by God, if it is a gospel-picture of Christ and His Bride, it follows that the process of leaving and cleaving must also be a public representation of Christ and His Bride. Recreational dating speaks nothing but lies about the gospel. Biblical Courtship and a culture of people who understand and practice it is not only necessary for obedience-sake; it is part of declaring the gospel to the world.