

Prepare For Success in Marriage

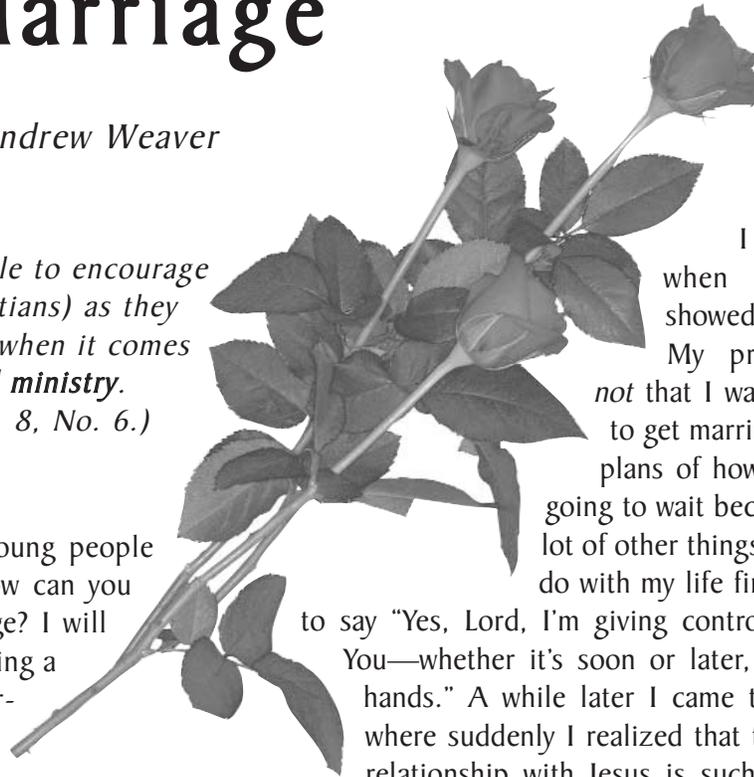
By Andrew Weaver

*This is part 2 of a 3-part article to encourage young people (and all Christians) as they prepare for a life of success when it comes to **money, marriage, and ministry.** (Part 1 was printed in Vol. 8, No. 6.)*

It is a simple fact that most young people will eventually be married. How can you prepare for success in marriage? I will define success in marriage as “having a relationship that accurately portrays Christ’s love for His bride and inspires other people to aim for that same standard.” It doesn’t matter what the society or the community around you accepts as normal or good. God’s standard is that we strive to love our spouses as Christ loved the church.

Marriage is the closest and most important human relationship. One of the best things you can do to prepare for that relationship is to learn to build and maintain good, healthy, honest relationships with other people. This begins right in your own home with your parents and, yes, with your “bossy” older brothers and sisters, and the younger ones that you think are “pests.” These relationships are foundation stones; they are preparation for marriage.

Of course, the most important relationship of all that you need to build and maintain is with the Lord Jesus Christ. I don’t believe that a person will experience a blessed marriage until they have had a relationship with Jesus that so satisfied them that they are willing to have that one alone for the rest of their life.



I remember when the Lord showed that to me. My problem was *not* that I was in a hurry to get married. I had my plans of how long I was going to wait because I had a lot of other things I wanted to do with my life first. So I had to say “Yes, Lord, I’m giving control of this to You—whether it’s soon or later, it’s in Your hands.” A while later I came to the place where suddenly I realized that this growing relationship with Jesus is such a treasure, such a joy, such a constant friendship, that even if I never do get married, even if this *is* the relationship that I have for the rest of my life, I will not feel slighted in any way at all. It wasn’t too long after that when God led me into another relationship—with my wife. But I could honestly say from my heart that, whether that happened or not, I was going to be content.

The goal is to learn to know Christ as an intimate friend and lover. I remember when the spiritual meaning of the Song of Solomon became so precious to me. Yes, it has an application to marriage, but this relationship between Jesus and me is just beautiful. As I studied that, I realized that I didn’t need more in order to be complete and fulfilled. But then, of course, God added so much more, and I praise him for that relationship I have with my wife.

I would encourage you young people to set very high goals and to dream very lofty dreams. But instead of having a very high list of standards for what your future spouse will have to measure up to, turn that back on *yourself* and ask God to make *you*

that kind of person. He's going to do it by pruning, sometimes chastisement, and also by just a life of daily growth with Him. It's not going to be all unpleasant and painful, but there will be some of that because our flesh and our old self-nature have to be put to death. But that is God making us into the kind of person that we someday want to marry. Cooperate fully with Him in His task of making you one of those people.

Have any of you girls ever had a daydream like this? You picture a beautiful little house, all in order, with everything spic-and-span. There is soft music playing and wonderful smells coming from the oven as you wait for your husband to come home from work. The baby is lying in the playpen cooing to herself, and the 2-year-old is folding the laundry and singing a song. The six-year-old boy? He is probably studying his algebra book or something! You're just waiting for your handsome husband to come and open the door.

Suddenly your daydream is interrupted by your little brother tugging at your elbow: "I can't find my socks!"

And you say, "Oh, why don't you ever put your socks away where they belong? I don't have time to help you; I'm busy."

Do you think there is any possibility that a person responding in the flesh like that is going to come even close to their daydream? Don't count on it. God has you in a school now with the people you think are the hardest to get along with. He is giving them to you as a gift, to learn not to respond in the flesh. He is teaching you to put that flesh to death and to respond in the power, grace, and anointing of the Holy Spirit. That is preparation for marriage, and that begins when you are very young. But it is God working on you to make *you* the kind of person that you think you deserve to have.

Someday when you are in love with a person, you will realize you owe them much more than you can

even give, and you will want to be all that you can possibly be. Then you will thank God for all of the sanctifying work that He has done in you to at least start you on that road to becoming who you want to be.

You don't have to settle for what you see around you. I would encourage you to observe other people, and families, not in a critical way, but observe them and see what you want to emulate. Find role models—those you want to learn from and ask advice from, and those you don't want to.

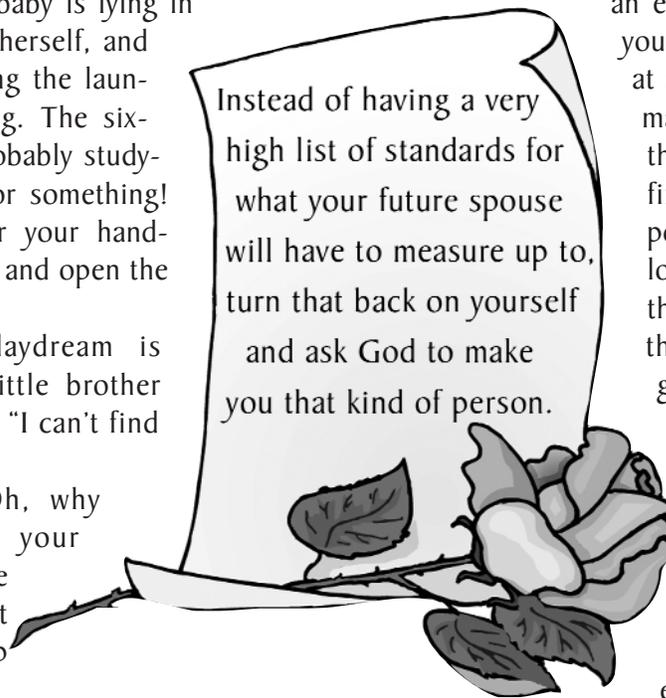
You don't even have to settle for exactly the kind of marriage that your parents have. It is very important that you understand that you have no right to criticize or condemn them, but you can set

an even higher goal. Realize that your parents probably started out at a very different point in their marriage than you will. Perhaps they were not even saved at first, but by God's grace out-poured in their lives, and by a lot of hard work on their part, they have made great strides in their marriage. They have a good relationship, and God has done a lot of beautiful things in their lives.

Now they have given you the gift of starting at a point further along than back where they did. Because you have a good start, you may eventually go far beyond them.

But do you see what would be wrong with having a critical attitude toward your parents for where they are? Look at the distance they have traveled! Look at the grace of God, and be thankful that you were given the privilege of starting from where you are now. If you travel as far as they did, look where you will end up! So set your goals high, and follow after godly examples. If you pass up others, you have no right to ever look down at them or criticize them. They have experienced God's grace in bringing them a long distance, too.

Yes, set your standards high. Don't just think that because someone else tells you that disagreements and arguments are inevitable that they are—



because they are not. God does have a higher standard. The culture around you will have a standard, and possibly even the culture within the church may have a standard. They may say, "Out here is a line that you may never cross." That line could be physical abuse, a husband beating his wife, etc. And nobody, no couple would think of crossing that line.

Another couple might draw the line elsewhere and say, "Well, there's a line that we would never cross. We would never argue, shout, or get angry at each other." However, the culture would say that as long as you have not crossed that line, you have a good marriage; everything is all right.

But the verse I always think about in connection with this is: "*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Maybe you are thinking these are "small" sins: ignoring your spouse to try to teach him or her a lesson, or perhaps subtle little things of disrespect. But when you put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, you make no excuses for *any* kind of sin. Aim for that standard. You are not going to be there instantly—it is a process of walking with God, of being conformed to the image of Jesus—but go for that.

I would encourage you to read the verses on marriage. Perhaps type them out and hang them on your mirror. Be sobered when you look at what God is calling you to be. That gives you a purpose for which to work. You look at what God is calling you to be for your future spouse, and you say, "Lord, I know I'm not there, and I need Your chastisement, Your pruning, to make me like that." Invite God to work in your life in that way.

Remember that you owe it to your future spouse to be conscious of them as you interact with members of the opposite sex. I don't mean that you have to know who your future spouse is going to be, but you need to be aware that sometime you want to present yourself as a pure and undefiled gift to that person, and that means even the way you relate to other people. For you young men, develop a con-

sciousness that: "Someday I will probably be married. The girl whom I will one day marry may be watching me now. She may be watching the way I'm interacting with the young ladies. Is my future wife going to have to struggle with distrust because of the way that I've been too free and flirty? Or is she going to be very confident that I have kept myself physically, mentally, and spiritually only for her?" And the same goes for you young ladies. It is entirely possible to have good, healthy friendships between young men and young ladies, and to be able to come to marriage with no regrets.

I would also like to encourage you: don't burden yourself with trying to figure out all of God's will for the future when it comes to marriage. The example I think of is Peter. When he was in his jail cell, he may well have thought it was all over. Suddenly a bright light shone in the cell, and what did he do? He just followed that light, and one door after another opened in front of him until he came to the big city gate. It opened of its own accord, and he was free. He just followed the light, and God opened the doors as he went. There was nothing burdensome or difficult about that. It was simply a matter of obedience, step by step.

Sometimes God does impress on us the gravity of the decisions that we are making, and the life-changing possibilities and effects. It is right to feel that responsibility very heavily, but it is not a burden to seek God's will; it is a joy to walk after God in step-by-step obedience. He should have freedom as we walk along to correct our course a little bit to this side or that side. And we should be in the kind of relationship with Him where we respond immediately. I think God could save us from a lot of heartache and tragedy if we would walk that way.



Andrew and Elizabeth Weaver with their two children live in Latin America. This article was adapted from a sermon given at Charity Christian Fellowship. The full message entitled "Prepare For Success" is available from Charity Gospel Tape Ministry.

