

The Articles of
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...In Life

This past summer some friends and I took a quick road trip down to the beach for the weekend. While traveling back home on Sunday morning, we stopped off the highway to worship with a small congregation of about 20 people. You should have seen the look of excitement and joy that came over their faces as six college-aged kids walked through the door. It was almost like a famous celebrity had just arrived. Immediately, each of the members rushed up to shake our hands, welcome us to the service, and thank us for coming. "Oh we just love having young visitors like you. You all need to come and visit more often!" They were encouraged; they were uplifted; they were excited.

What is it about youth that creates so much energy and excitement in people? All we did was "show up", and yet just by our presence these people were encouraged. Solomon says that, "The glory of young men is their strength" (Proverbs 20:29). Being young is a gift. We have natural talents and abilities just because of our age. We can stay up longer, we can learn faster, we can adapt more quickly, and we have more energy. Being young allows us to run our bodies night and day, get two hours of sleep, and be ready to start all over again tomorrow.

Whether you realize it or not, people are drawn to those who are young. The spirit and vitality of youth have a tendency to "rub off" on other people. There is a certain innocence that is associated with youth; an optimistic expectation of the future and "what could be" or what "might become of this person". We fill our childhood minds with goals and dreams about the life that lies ahead of us. The future and its possibilities seem limitless. Our youth is a privilege and a gift from God.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might...But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord". Youth is not something to glory in or boast about "for all these things God will bring you into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). And as any older person can tell you, the days of youth are few and passing- "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6).

How can we use this "gift" to glorify God and to "be an example in conduct" or "manner of life" for believers and those inside the church (1 Timothy 4:12)? Many young people spend all their time gratifying themselves, looking for the next high and only pursuing the newest form of entertainment. But the Lord is searching for young men and women who will faithfully serve in His kingdom, preparing themselves to be leaders in the church, keepers of the home, and ambassadors for the Gospel of Christ. As young Christians, we can do so much to build up the body of Christ. Your presence alone at a worship service or a Bible study is uplifting. We have the ability to "stir up love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24) every time we attend an assembly of God's people. By saying "hello" to someone new, writing cards to those who are discouraged, or by visiting someone who is sick, we can strengthen the people of God, and build a lasting character within ourselves.

You would be amazed at what a little excitement and enthusiasm can do for a church that has grown cold with routine and indifference towards the worship service. Instead of focusing all our energy towards video games, movies, friends and sports, why not use some of that God-given youthful vigor to serve in His church? As Paul writes, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). May God bless us with the courage and the desire to serve Him, and to "remember our Creator, in the days of (our) youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

-January 2008

He Who Finds a Wife

On the fourteenth day of this month, millions of people around the country will be searching for ways to express their feelings for that special someone in their life. Valentine's Day has become the official holiday of love and romance. But whether it's flowers, candy or a last minute stop at the grocery store to find a card, this day has become a time when both young and old show their affection to the one they love. In fact, according to the Diamond Information Center, ten percent of all engagements take place on Valentines Day. They would come out with a statistic like that...!

With so much "love" floating in the air, I thought it would be appropriate for us to consider the following question: what are you looking for in a spouse? Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord". The writer says "he who finds", which implies that there is a search when it comes to finding a husband or a wife. Whether it's your parents (Joshua 15:16), your father's servant (Genesis 24), or if it's just you wading through relationships and online dating services, someone has to consider what qualities and characteristics are desired in a mate.

What are you looking for in a girl? What traits or features attract you to a particular guy? Marriage is a wonderful thing, but sometimes dating and the search for a spouse can be down right awful. Maybe the problem with some of the relationships that we get into is that we are looking for the wrong thing to begin with. We find ourselves attracted to someone because of their outward appearance or popularity status, but give no regard to their character or moral values. We like certain people because they're funny, they're romantic, or because they're fun to be with. We stay in a relationship because it's comfortable or because we don't want to upset their family or our friends. And how many times have we tried to convince ourselves that, "this person is going to change one day"?

There is nothing wrong with looking at the different attributes or characteristics in others when we are trying to decide who we should date. However, what should we place the most emphasis on: looks, personality, spirituality, job, talents, car they drive...? In Genesis 6:1-2 it says, "It came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose." This was the beginning of moral and spiritual decline during the time of Noah. Men of righteousness began to intermarry with the daughters of the wicked. Their motivation appears to be based primarily on physical lust and attraction.

To put it very simply, we should be seeking to marry someone who loves God (Matthew 22:37). Does it matter if we date the most beautiful person in the world, if they cause our relationship with God to suffer? "For what will it profit a man if he (marries a supermodel), and loses his own soul?"(Mark 8:36). I modified the verse a little, but you get the picture. Are we looking to date young ladies who are "of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:4)? Do we place emphasis on finding a woman who is preparing to be good mother, a keeper of the home, and one

who displays a submissive attitude (1 Peter 3:5)? The writer of Proverbs says it best: “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised” (31:30). A beautiful girl who shows no respect for God and His law is nothing but “a ring of gold in a pig’s snout” (Proverbs 11:22). In contrast, there is no value that can be placed upon finding a young lady who is trying to serve the Lord and keep herself pure.

The application applies to both guys and girls. As a young Christian woman, are you attracting the right type of guys through the way you dress and the way you handle yourself? Are you looking to date men whom Paul describes as “sober-minded, in all things showing (themselves) to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility” (Titus 2:6-7)? Are you striving to marry someone who will provide for your family spiritually as well as physically? We are never going to find a person who is perfect in every way. But we must be searching for a spouse who is going to help us draw closer to God, and ultimately reach our final goal of heaven.

What are you looking for in a spouse? What traits or qualities do you desire in your mate? A marriage in which both husband and wife honor and worship God is a marriage bound for success.

“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.” (Proverbs 31:10-12)

-February 2008

Just a Few More Minutes

When I was growing up, every Sunday morning (or any day of the week when we didn't have school) my father would come into my room and begin the long process/battle of trying to get me out of bed. He would start by opening the curtains and turning off the fan (if it was hot) or ripping off my covers (if it was cold). He would let me suffer in those conditions for a little while, and then return with his second wave of attacks. Dad would head over to the stereo and blare the music on some obnoxious radio station. In my stubbornness to stay in bed, I would curl up into a little ball and hold the pillow over my face and ears. As my father pulled at my feet and began to literally lift me out of bed, I would make one final cry of desperation: "Just a few more minutes!"

Life is continually changing. Just when we start getting comfortable with our surroundings and our routine, that's when something happens that totally remaps our direction. We graduate, we move to a new town, we start a new job, we lose our current job, we get married, we have kids, our kids move out, we become sick or we lose someone we love. Nothing in this life stays the same forever. In Psalms 90:12, Moses writes, *"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."* By realizing how quickly our life passes, we can develop a better understanding of our purpose and our direction on this earth.

Just as in sports, when the clock runs out, the game is over. There are no extensions or additions of time (except in soccer). The only difference is that in the game of life, none of us know how much time is left on the clock. There is one thing, however, we can be certain of: life is short! Our time on this earth is described as a *"breath"* and *"a passing shadow"* (Psalms 144:4). Even if we live to be a 110 years old, our years are nothing when compared to the eternal presence of the great I AM. Very few of us will ever find our names written in a history book or our faces etched onto the side of a coin. Instead, most of us find our place as described in the psalms: *"For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more"* (Psalms 103:13-16).

When we reach the end of our lives, there will be no more second chances. We won't be able to ask for "just a few more minutes" or a few more days. There will be no extensions or requests for more time. That's why it is imperative for each one of us to use the time God has given us wisely. Ephesians 5:15-16 says, *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."* Some versions actually render the verse, *"Be careful how you walk!"* We only get one shot at this life. It's easy to think that we have plenty of time to get our life together and start living for God. Thirty seems like forever away (for most of you), forty is way out of sight, and fifty is just something you tease your parents about. But in the end our life is but a *"vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"* (James 4:14).

When we see our life as the Lord does, as something that is extremely short and very limited, it should help us establish our priorities and place emphasis on the things that

matter most. Even in the first century, Peter warned the early Christians about the end of this earth and the importance of godly conduct: *“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers”* (1 Peter 4:7). Are we taking time to speak to our Father in prayer? Are we spending time in the Word, preparing ourselves to *“give a defense...for the hope that is in (us)”* (1 Peter 5:9)? If we just keep waiting until next month or next year to start making changes, we are never going to find *“a convenient time”* (Acts 24:25) to give ourselves wholly and completely to the Lord.

Let us live our lives in such a way so that when our clock finally does run out, instead of asking for more time, *“we may boldly say: The LORD is my helper; I will not fear”* (Hebrews 13:6).

-June 2008