

He Who Finds a Wife

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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)

Getting involved in your local congregation

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How many times have you asked the question, “How can I help the Lord’s work?” For people of a younger age that are spiritually-minded, this is a question that will come up from time to time. Young people are interested in helping the Lord’s work and we have an energy and zeal that we will not have in later years. But, one thing we must have as a part of our zeal is knowledge. How can I use my zeal and enthusiasm in a way that God wants for his people? How can I get involved in my local congregation? The first thing we need to realize is that this is a wonderful attitude! We need workers in the Lord’s church who are fired up about the idea of helping others. Now, let’s put that attitude into some specifics duties that we can do.

Young people have the great ability to encourage people by their desire for the truth. Use that to your advantage! The older members of our congregations do not expect great, amazing, super-human, things from us. How are some ways I can get involved in the services of the church? Let us begin with the young men. Young men have the ability to get involved in the worship services of the congregation. They can read scripture, lead songs, lead prayers, and give invitations. Now as soon as I write that, someone is thinking, “But Shane, those duties make me nervous, and I don’t want to make a fool of myself.” My friend, I was in the same place not long ago. I started participating in worship at young age, and as I grew I assisted in different parts of the worship. What I am encouraging you to do is to start small. The reading of scripture most of the time is less than a minute, and you will not be expected to read like James Earl Jones your first time. Remember that the other members are encouraging you and they want you to do well! Now let’s move into some more general activities in which both men and women can be involved. How about helping out in a Bible class? Or getting involved in the cleaning and repair of the building? There are other activities that can be done by people our age, we just have to seek out the opportunity! Let’s take a closer look at Bible classes. Bible classes are for all ages, and it is great to get more people involved who can learn how to teach Bible classes. Keep in mind you do not have to be a renowned Bible scholar to teach a Bible class to two and three year-olds. What they need are basics that you should be familiar with. Also, get paired up with someone that is more experienced in teaching Bible classes and they can help you learn. Do not teach a Bible class all on your own unless those who are older agree to it. Keep in mind that because we are younger we are to respect those who are older. May we

keep this attitude of willingness ever before us and I hope this encourages you to get involved in the services the church offers.

Let's move on to helping needy members of the congregation. Different ways we can do this are all over if you look for them. Get with someone older and go visit one of the shut-ins or one of the older members. They come to life when someone our age comes to visit them. Ask around and see if you can help babysit for someone who needs it, or clean a yard of a older member. These are all acts that need to be done and they should never be looked down upon! Be a servant to your fellow members! In John 13:4-17, Jesus teaches His disciples about serving one another. He gets up from the table and prepares himself to wash the feet of the disciples. This is definitely not one of the first tasks I would have done. You mean I have to clean those nasty, dirty feet? Jesus shows His humility in this story. The Creator of the world lowers Himself to the point of cleaning the dust off of His creation! What an amazing example of service. But, what does that mean for me, Shane? It means that we are all servants that should desire to help those in need, especially our brethren (Gal. 6:10). Go and ask how you can get involved!

Finally, one of the greatest and most rewarding ways you can get involved in your local congregation is by talking to your friends about the gospel. I know that sounds like a big task, but let's analyze it for a moment. In school (junior high to college), we write papers, take tests, give presentations, and who knows what the teachers will come up with next! We are capable of using our bright, knowledgeable minds to learn the Bible! We have the capacity to understand the truth of God's word just like we can understand the history of the United States. We have such brilliant minds in school but when it comes to God's word how do we stack up? My point is that we can learn God's word, and we can teach God's word. Find a way that you can teach the gospel to your friends. Get a book that shows verses for a specific topic, talk to them about the church where you worship and what it's trying to do, and invite your friends to services and Bible studies. These and more are all ways that you can be involved in spreading God's word as a young person! What a great and wonderful task the Lord has given us that we can be involved in the teaching of the gospel! You cannot expect to communicate truth like a preacher, or have the knowledge of an elder who has been studying for 40 years, but you can do something!

What we need in the church today are people who want to get involved. We need people who will do their part (Eph 4:11-16). Young people are in a pivotal part of their lives in regard to helping others. They give so much encouragement to the older members, and they have so much contact with non-

Christians! I hope this has given each of us a greater desire and practical ways to get involved in the work of God. To the work!

The Light That Saves

Travis Starling

If any of you have ever seen any of the “Indiana Jones” movies or one of the “Mummy” movies, you have surely seen a scene where the characters are walking around in a dark cave. Before the characters found something to light, they were stumbling around, and they had absolutely no idea where they were going. Whether it is a match or a torch, as soon as the characters have a source of light, they immediately have sight in the cave and are able to maneuver around in the cave efficiently. We are simply living in a time of darkness on this earth. With many stumbling blocks in our way and many paths for us to take, as Christians it is most difficult to hold fast to the faith; to the truth. But just as Indiana Jones had his torch to light his way, we too have a source of light that will guide us to the right path and will enable us to dodge the stumbling blocks along the way.

Psalms 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (NKJ) Why does the writer of this passage describe “the word” as a “lamp” and a “light”? It is because the world in which we are living in is a dark place, full of immorality and ungodliness. We have television that is mostly showing filth, movies that are popular because of the sex scenes or the nudity, an internet that allows everything imaginable to be accessed, an education system that teaches that there is no God, and a society that continues to take all of the many physical blessings we have here in the United States for granted. We might also have friends and family that are not Christians that do not care about what God truly wants us to do. Most people are going to live a worldly life, and if we have friends that are of the world, they might have an influence on us that is harmful. Matt. 7:13–14 says, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Satan himself is also trying to pull us off the narrow path. Job 1:7 says, “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” Satan is amongst us finding out our weaknesses and creating stumbling blocks that sometimes seem almost impossible to avoid. In 1Pet. 3:8, Satan is referred to as a “lion”, which is seeking who he may devour. So with all of these things fighting against us, how do

we as Christians keep from getting pulled off the narrow path, or stumbling over an obstacle? We look to the light for Guidance. We turn to the word, to the prophetic scriptures to make sure our path is lighted as best as possible. John 3:21 says, “But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Light is the essence of all that is good, and darkness is the essence of all that is evil. God’s word helps us to stay true to the path of righteousness while we live in a very dark place. There might be times when we feel like we are completely lost in this sinful world, but if we are constantly turning to, looking at, and seeking for the light, we, through the power of God, can stay on the narrow path.

You Just Had To Be There

Brandon Starling

Have you ever experienced something incredible? Ever witnessed an event so amazing it left you thinking, “Just wait until my friends hear about this!?” Sure enough, the next time you’re with a group of people and find an opening in the conversation, you decide it’s your time to shine. You describe the event, allowing the anticipation to build until the part where you expect everyone to be just as spellbound as you were. And then it happens. You scan the faces of your audience, and one by one, they all seem to be telling you the same thing: “That was the lamest story I’ve ever heard.” The crickets chirp in the background as you awkwardly finish with, “I guess you just had to be there.” Nobody wants to be that guy, but the truth is we have probably all experienced this unfortunate disappointment at some time.

Now, I want to pose a couple questions: Have we lost our amazement and appreciation for the Bible’s miracles? When God looks into our hearts as we read about His stories, does He experience that same disappointment?

I vividly remember sitting on the edge of my Bible class seat as a young child reading God’s miraculous accounts. Unfortunately, as we grow older we face the danger of losing our awe and respect for miracles. This is a shame, because they are one of the most important aspects of the Bible. They show us both the incomparable power of God, and the validity of His message.

Notice what Paul tells the Corinthians when he is warning them against false doctrines of men. “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that

your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2: 4–5).

The miracles of the Bible assure us that God’s word is set apart from all other religions and religious messages. Even the staunchest enemies of the gospel could not deny the miracles of the New Testament. In Acts 4, Peter and John heal a man who was known throughout Jerusalem to have been lame from birth. Notice what the Sanhedrin Council says after Peter and John’s arrest: “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and WE CAN NOT DENY IT” (Acts 4: 14–16). This was not a miracle that only those wishing to follow Christ could understand; the power of God was evident to all!

Miracles not only serve to verify God’s word, they have a unique way of teaching us important lessons as well. I would like to briefly consider one such lesson that is especially vital to our lives as young Christians.

Miracles remind us to be humble. In Luke 5, Jesus notices his disciples on the shore cleaning their nets after an unsuccessful night of fishing. Anyone who enjoys dropping a line has felt the frustrations of reeling in more seaweed than fish, but try to put yourselves in Peter’s place. This was his livelihood. A failure to catch fish meant lost income. I like to imagine a little smile crept over Jesus’ face as he told Peter to launch back into the deep for a catch. We all know what happens next: “And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink” (Luke 5: 6–7). Can you imagine how amazed these fishermen must have been? Not only did Peter make a successful catch after a night of fruitless attempts, he caught so many fish the boats began to sink!

How many of us would have resented Jesus for showing us up at our own profession? Or, if you’re like me, you would have been greedily thinking, “I’m bringing Jesus fishing with me EVERY time.” But notice what Peter does in verse 8: “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

When Peter saw this act of power, he was humbled. The great catch and the other fishermen who were possibly still working to secure it no longer mattered to him. He was solely concerned with the sudden realization that he was a sinner in the presence of Jesus Christ.

This is precisely the attitude we should all have. Paul reminds us we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). We have all turned our backs on the love, mercy, and power of God to follow our own selfish desires. We have all fallen victim to the

pride of life. We are all unworthy to stand in the presence of Christ. The next time you find yourself too prideful to forgive someone, to take responsibility for your own mistake, or to seek the help of a brother or sister, ask yourself a few questions: Do I have the power to walk on water? Do I have the power to heal a blind man? Do I have the power to raise myself from the dead?

As young Christians, pride can be an especially dangerous enemy. We live in a society that honors youth over age. While our youth can be a great asset in God's kingdom, we must remember His constant reminders to respect and seek after the wisdom of our elders. Throughout the entire book of Proverbs, Solomon pleads with the young to heed the instructions of the wise. Peter tells us, "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders" (1 Peter 5:5). 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are all letters of instruction written to young evangelists by the older and more experienced Paul. The moment we allow ourselves to believe we are either smarter than or unable to gain anything from those Christians who are of greater age and maturity than we are, youthful pride has won.

I thank God for the miracles He performed and recorded for us. Let us never fail to be awestruck by these amazing events, nor lose sight of the lessons they teach us.

How to Change the World

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If you were to ask children what they hope to be when they grow up, you would receive a variety of answers. At the heart of all their answers would be one principle: they want to make a difference. Continuing through life into adolescence and teenage years, this aspiration continues, but somewhere along the way most lose it. Difficulties arrive and hardships settle in. Instead of standing fast to convictions and world-changing goals, a compromise is struck. After several years and many compromises, we are content to just live. Has the chance to change the world past? Certainly not!

When Jesus came into this world, He came to change it entirely. Jesus came to "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). The lost make up the entire world, and all of us are lost at least at one point in our lives (Romans 3:23). God desires that all men everywhere repent and be saved (Acts 17:30, 1 Timothy 2:4). If we can follow the example of Christ and His apostles, we can have the same effect

on the world. We are not discussing starting a new religion, but taking the same truths that changed the first century and changing the world around us today.

How did Jesus approach evangelism? What did Jesus teach the apostles to do? If we could find the answers to these questions, then we could have the same results. After all, there is “nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9) and that includes humanity and God’s truth. God’s word is “quick and powerful” today and will continue to be until we meet Him in heaven (Hebrews 4:12).

This will be the first article in a series addressing the subject of evangelism. The series will be an analysis of Jesus’ approach to changing the world and the effect it had on the first century. The author does not claim to be an expert in the field of evangelism, so he will be relying on God’s word, interviews of older evangelists, many books, and hours of research. May these articles aid you and may we all work together for the glory of God.