

Relationships:

the heart, brain and courage to pursue (Part 3)

For the last two months we've tackled the confusing and very misunderstood topic of dating and courtship.

This is about PREPARATION – this is about valuing God's opinion over our culture's opinion...this is about being *ready* to pursue and be pursued...

Hebrews 4:12-13; Romans 12:1-2; 15:13

The closer you come to the core issues of your life (the hot topics) AND the closer you come to the areas of sin in your life, the less rational you're tempted to become...so you need the clarity of God's Word ringing in your ears.

1. The *heart* behind the pursuit

Understand God's heart – God's goal – for relationships and adopt that heart as our own!

Many of you are at a crossroads.

You'll have to decide if your relationship with Jesus is going to define how you walk out relationships.

Proverbs 14:12 tells us, *"There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death."*

One of the biggest dangers you face today is *death pretending to be life*.

Do we believe that God has our best interest at heart when He shows us the way to live through His Word? Or do we think He's in some way, holding back things we'd be better off having?

The gospel confronts and cures our suspicion of God and builds trust...

My goal? That you would walk away saying, *"Here's what I know: I want to honor God in my relationships with the opposite sex, so I will look to His Word and discover what living in purity looks like, believing that God has my best interest in mind. I'm not going to be rushed into anything by society – or the fear of man – but I'm going to trust God to help me **pursue and be pursued!**"*

When you pursue a *purposeful* relationship – one that honors God – you are *"Pursuing a friendship with possibility and discovery of whether you're meant to be married. It's above all, purposeful. It's not without risk and should involve the authority God has placed in your lives. It's simply a way to be careful with the other person's heart while opening up your lives to each other."*

2. The *Brain* behind the pursuit

What do you *look for* in the opposite sex?

Is there a standard? Why do people "settle"?

**To the guys, how can you prepare - what are you looking for in a woman?
Lady's, what are you looking for in a man - how can you prepare?**

Besides your commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, who you marry is one of the most important decisions you will ever make.

How you go about this reveals a lot about your submission to Christ.

You need to have a plan...intentionality

3. The courage to pursue

What do I mean by having *the courage to pursue*?

What is courage to begin with? It's the ability to do something that frightens people.

"She called on all her courage to arm wrestle the bear."

It is strength in the face of pain or grief or a serious difficulty or challenge.

Courage is what makes someone face extreme danger or difficulty without retreating. It implies not only bravery and a determined spirit but the ability to endure...this is someone who has guts.

This leads to **resolution** – the determination to achieve a goal in spite of opposition – or **tenacity** – which is **stubborn persistence**.

Philippians 1:20-22 (discuss)

You can't approach this topic casually anymore.

You need courage to pursue.

There are way to many casualties – there are way to many pitfalls and traps!

Do you have the courage? Will you carry a resolve to honor God in this pursuit?

Will you honor God in your preparation? Will you honor God in your patience?

Will you think clearly about this topic rather than rushing into something?

There are some familiar distractions in this pursuit I want to warn you of:

1. compromise
2. apathy – absence or suppression of passion, emotion or excitement; an overall lack of interest.
3. indifference – a lack of interest or concern; mediocrity (neither very good or very bad); "I don't care" attitude.
4. laziness
5. Fear – fear of failure – fear of missing "it"
6. impatience
7. arrogance
8. selfishness
9. lust – intense desire or appetite that is never satisfied.
10. The search for significance and acceptance (idolatry)

God has wired most of you for a future marriage!
What then, should your courageous pursuit look like *right now*?

#1 Courageously embrace God as your treasure (Matthew 13:44-45).

If you don't treasure Him now, your relationship and future marriage will be based on whatever idols are set up in His place!

So how do you practically treasure God?

What do you think this looks like?

Courageously pursue the opposite sex by courageously pursuing God.

#2 Courageously accept your season of life and don't waste it!

- **Accept your calling to maturity.**
Growth in your understanding and expression of masculinity and femininity.
- **Invite mature Christians in your life to help you discern how to go about your friendships in purity.**
- **Accept that your relationship with the opposite sex will look different than your non-Christian co-worker and even some of your other Christian friends.**
In your pursuit, you are still discovering and preparing - discovering how you're wired and where you're headed.

In my opinion, things should only begin to get more serious when the two of you are in a position to marry within the next year or two....

#3 Courageously show your faith in God by the way you live your life

1 Timothy 4:12

Set an example in **speech** and in **life** - set an example in **love** and in **faith** - set an example in **purity**

How are you interacting with the people God places in our lives?

How are you interacting with the opposite sex in your life right now?

Are they just people to flirt with, or fantasize over, or make fun of....do you treat them with love and worth?

Do you treat the Christian as a brother or sister in Christ who belongs to God and who one day will be married to someone (most likely it won't be you).
How we love and treat each other either upholds the truth we proclaim or destroys the truth we proclaim!

Titus 2:11-14

The same grace that makes salvation available to all teaches God's people **how to live** in this present age.

This isn't mere moralism.

God's grace has appeared with a purpose in mind.

Where there is grace, there will be change.

God is calling us to live radical lives for His glory...not our own!

Verse 12 – We are students of grace. A student receives instruction. A student comes to class with a desire to learn – not assuming he/she has the subject all figured out.

The grace of God teaches us to say “No.”

I can't tell you how many times I have turned to *this* passage for strength. It is a continual reminder of the equipping grace of God in my life. It reminds me that by God's grace alone I can truly stare sin in the face and say, “No!”

- “No” to ungodliness...

Ungodliness simply means, “having no regard for God.”

This means ignoring God and not taking Him into account in one's life.

It's a lack of fear and reverence for Him.

God will be dealing with ungodliness in our lives as long as we live on this earth.

This training we receive isn't all at once. It's an ongoing work.

That's exactly what sanctification is...

- “No” to worldly passions...

Worldly passions are the desire for and obsession with the things of this life – possessions, pleasures, prestige, power...

It's the tangible – what we see and touch and buy that we struggle with.

To say “No” then is a decisive break with those attitudes and practices.

1 Peter 2:11 tells us that there are “sinful desires” that we're to abstain from – say “No” to – and these sinful desires are at war against your soul. Grace equips us with the weapons we need to fight this battle with sin.

To say “no” means that we must constantly recognize these desires as evil and deceitful (**Jms. 1:14; Eph. 4:22**) – call them out for what they are!

Our sinful desires want to be entertained.

They taunt us and suggest certain sinful pleasures are “deserved.”

If we carry them out we'll be “satisfied!” Those are the lies. We need to see through these lies!

There are many people who would fall under the **Titus 1:16** category. People who have made a *profession* of faith; they claim to “know God,” but grace is not teaching them to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions. Their lives are no different than when they first believed. Is conviction acted upon?

The grace of God teaches us to say “Yes.”

We’ve learned to say “No” but now we need to learn to say “Yes” – “yes” to those things that bring glory to God.

These words are a brief summation of a Christian’s responsibilities. Verse 12 says, “...*in this present age*” – this means right now! *This* day. These are the things we are enabled by God’s grace to say “Yes” to. This is life changing.

When lacking self-control look to God’s grace in Christ.

Look to the cross.

When tempted to walk in worldliness, look to Christ and fix your eyes there.

Consider His cross, consider His resurrection – consider His glorious return.

When you find yourself facing ungodliness - look to Christ and His grace and ask Him to teach you and show you what to do.

It’s right here in God’s Word to us – God’s grace *teaches* us.

The same grace that brought salvation is the same grace that teaches how to live lives pleasing to God.

We have two choices: rely on our own willpower or rely on our union with Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit for power.

When I lack self-control I need to ask myself, “*What am I relying on?*” “*What am I saying “Yes” to?*” “*Is grace the foundation of my action?*” “*Have I forgotten what I’ve been delivered from?*”

I’m speaking of a life that is *being transformed* by its Maker, a people who are being prepared for that final day.

Christians are people who look to the *past* work of Christ on the cross to find their source of *present* hope and strength to live for God’s glory!

Your motivation? **(1 Thess. 4:7-8)**

Why do YOU *want* to live this way? **(1 Peter 4:1-5)**

And finally...

#4 Courageously ask God for wisdom

James 1:5; Proverbs 2:1-10

Not only does God respond, He delights to give wisdom!

God is the source of it.

Wisdom takes what we've learned from about God and applies that knowledge to our daily lives.

Wait on God Isaiah 64:4 (this does not = do nothing!)

God loves to show Himself strong to those who humbly submit themselves and treasure Him above all things.

Are you going to courageously pursue the opposite sex by courageously pursuing God?

Some of you need to pray for courage tonight – to literally cry out for it!

Some of you have your priorities all wacked out.

Some of you long for a relationship so bad it's become an idol and replaced your passion and pursuit of God.

Some of you have no idea what pursuing God looks like because you haven't taken the time to do it.

Some of you have been zoned out the entire time tonight and need to repent.

Some of you will be spared a lot of pain, a lot of heartache, a lot of sin – because God's grace is breaking through what culture has laid over your hearts and minds!

Decide:

"I'm done with checking out when living for Jesus gets hard or uncomfortable.

I'm tired of missing out on God's purposes for my single years because I'm so caught up and distracted..."

Ephesians 5:15-17

Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men and women who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of the Lord.

The watching world is desperate for a faith that combines two things:

1. An awestruck understanding of diving truth – the Word of God, the cross of Christ, etc.
2. Practical power to make a difference in life – living in response to what we know by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Romans 15:13

Questions for discussion and application

1. What does it mean to have *the courage to pursue*? Pursue what? Pursue who?
2. Why does it take courage to begin with?
3. What are some of the greatest distractions in your life to this kind of courageous pursuit? How can you fight those distractions?
4. Now that this series is over what are you going to walk away with? How will you apply this to your relationships with the opposite sex?
5. Has your perspective adjusted or even changed in light of this series? If so, how?