***The Divine Institution of Marriage

M-1A***

We now begin a series of study on the Bible doctrine of marriage. God has provided the divine institution of marriage for all of the human race for its preservation and for its perpetuation. In this series we are going to be setting forth some concepts that are contrary to what is generally accepted within our society. You may find, as a matter of fact, that some of these may appear to you to be downright old-fashioned. However, we would encourage you to realize that your own background, your own frame of reference, may cause you actually to miss the truth as God sees it and as God has set it forth. Your own religious background, the background of your particular denomination, the influences of your home upbringing, the influences of the educational institutions that you have attended all have contributed certain concepts and certain ideas. These are not necessarily divine viewpoint, and in large measure, they are downright human viewpoint.

For example, we have the concept of evolution which is so generally accepted by thousands upon thousands of college students and millions of Americans. This idea is such a fraud, and no serious, thinking, educated mind can, in all honesty, say that here is an established proven fact. It is a theory that is believed because most people believe it. A recent scientific journal, reporting on experiments and seeking to search out the accuracy of the carbon 14 method of dating upon which evolution has based so much of its concepts of the age of the earth and the age of life, has interestingly enough revealed that instead of 50,000 years ago or even millions of years ago that some of the original dating techniques had reported with the carbon 14 method, that they have now learned, as they have more accurately learned to use this method, that these dates are reduced to within 10,000 years, which of course is exactly in keeping with what the Word of God teaches.

So here is an idea that is strongly accepted, and if somebody came along and said that evolution is a fraud, and it is an unscientific, unfounded, non-intellectual idea, they would be scoffed. Yet the Bible is an infallible book. It came from God through men. It is absolutely accurate. Any time that it touches upon any fact of history, science, or whatever it may be, it is absolutely accurate, and in time has consistently been proven to be the truth.

So, it would behoove us to believe that God knows what He's talking about when he tells us something about the relationship of men and women and the institution of marriage. So be careful to avoid negative responses just because you have something already in mind and you don't want the facts to change your thinking. If you're not married, this is an especially valuable series to you. Learning this material thoroughly will provide you with a tremendous background against entering a sorry marriage. It will provide you with great stability in understanding what God has in mind for you at making a proper choice.

Now someone has indicated that those who are married are going to hope that they have made good choices and that they have followed sound principles. However, the young people among us who are not married, and the young adults who are in the unmarried state will be listening and picking up all the details, and I hope that's true.

Now the American divorce statistic is something pretty frightening. The National Observer reported recently that the 1960 census of the United States indicated that out of four marriages, one ended in divorce. The 1970 census has indicated that one out of three marriages ends in divorce in the United States. The divorce rate is up 25% in the last two years alone. This huge divorce tragedy indicates that people muddle into marriage like dumb animals. For example, here's a case history I'd like to read to you about a young woman who at 18 entered a teenage marriage, which is a disaster in itself usually, and her sad experience as she thinks back and relates how it all turned out.

She writes, "We met at this part-time job I had. He was 23 and head of the department. All the girls, even the engaged ones, used to coo over him and say, "Oh, he's nice." One day he asked me out. Three weeks later he asked me to marry him. Me! I never had any responsibility at home. Mother washed my clothes, ironed my clothes, laid out my clothes, and even bought my clothes, and she still does. To this day I don't do anything. The day after the wedding I knew it was a mistake. As time went by it only got worse. Nothing was the way it was supposed to be. He wouldn't give me money. He pushed me from one dingy furnished room to another.

There were so many bills. I never knew what it was like. You know, you live with your family. They pay for everything. Then suddenly you're faced with bills. You're on your back, and they're getting court orders. It was just too much. It was all so different from the way I pictured it. I don't know exactly how it is supposed to be, but more fun--different. And he seemed so different before I married him. This man on the outside--so big and good looking and nice, but so afraid on the inside. So chicken--afraid of his mother, his father--afraid of everything. He was a baby--really a child, and he called me immature. The worst thing that happened to me was I learned to hate. I never hated anyone before. I don't even like the word, but I hate that man. And somehow with all the troubles I've been through, I'm empty. Everything is gone out of me. Next time, I'll look for someone more mature."

Marriage doesn't have to be this kind of a sorry experience. Yet, for vast numbers of Americans it is. But God has a better way. For those of you who have some confused, mixed-up, disoriented ideas on this subject of the relationship between young men and young women and the subject of marriage itself, we are hoping that we will give you enough information from the Word of God backed up by Christian-oriented experience to get you straightened out before it's too late. Some of us have had to listen to the sad tragic stories of people whose promising lives suddenly have come to nothing because they made the wrong move in marriage.

Marriage was arranged by God Himself for man's happiness. Yet for millions it's sheer torture. Millions of mothers are trying to preserve their daughters from the sufferings that they have experienced in marriage. Experience indicates that marital troubles in large part stem from the courtship that led to the marriage. Obviously, nobody marries to be unhappy or to get divorced. There are some biblical guidelines, some principles, for selecting a right partner. These factors must be clearly understood and accepted before you are emotionally involved with someone. Therefore, I hope you will study this series without going negative on any single feature. I hope that if you find some feature that you think that you can't respond to, that you'll set it aside temporarily, and that you'll respond positively to those that you find in your heart you can. You may discover as we go along that you'll be able to come back and say, "I see the wisdom in this particular guideline and this particular principle and I can accept it. You may be dead wrong, but hopefully you will, as the picture evolves, discover this before it's too late.

**The Divine Institution of Marriage**

So, let's look at the divine institution of marriage. It began with a need that Adam had. A divine institution is a law which has been ordained by God for the whole race. It is for the perpetuation and the protection of humanity, and it applies to those who are Christians and those who are non-Christians. The historical record of the institution itself begins in Genesis 2:18: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him.'" The basic principle set forth is that it is not good to be single. In the Hebrew, there is no verb. In your English translation, the words "it is" are in italics. This, of course, always indicates that these words are not in the original text, but they have been inserted by the translators to clarify the meaning. You may read it, therefore, without those words, and it has a pungent emphasis when you do it that way: "The Lord God said, 'Not good that man should be alone.'" We often speak like this ourselves in the English language.

The emphasis here is that it is not God's normal state for people to be single. There are exceptions--those who have the gift of celibacy, or those who are eunuchs, as per Matthew 19:12 and 1 Corinthians 7:7. This principle that it is not good to be in a single state was true even in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. Alone is not ideal. So, God decided to make Adam a helper. Some translations translated this as God was going to make him a "help meet," which is old English meaning "a help fit for him." So, God's basic purpose for woman is to be a help to her husband. This she can only fully be when she is married to the right man. We're going to get into this later in more detail. God has a particular man for a particular woman. God does not simply expect you to marry one of any number of possibilities. In His plan, in His design, He has a perfect choice. We're going to talk about how to search that out, how to discover, and how to identify that ideal choice. The woman, to be fit for a man, must be of his own kind, of his own species, and of a different sex. So, what Adam needed was someone like himself, Homosapiens, but of the opposite sex.

Now the lack of such a person, such a helper, became evident to Adam as he viewed, as he studied, and as he named the animals who were brought to him by God. In Genesis 2:19 says, "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them. And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all the cattle and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a help fit for him." So, God proceeded to meet the need of Adam, to give him someone of his own kind who could be a help and who was fit for him. Genesis 2:21 tells us how he did that: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept. And he took one of his ribs and closed up (or sealed up) the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He into a woman, and brought her unto the man. So, God used a rib which he took from Adam to make the woman.

The word "made" in verse 22, "made He a woman" is the Hebrew word which means to build or to construct. It is not the Hebrew word for direct creation. The woman was made out of something that already existed. Man's body, Adam's body, was made from the earth materials which God previously had created out of nothing by his spoken word. Then God took the earth materials and he put together the body of man. The Hebrew there means "formed," He simply shaped him. He did not create the body of Adam. What God created was Adam's soul and spirit. The soul and spirit God created as he breathed into man. This was an act of creation. So, in this very way that the woman was brought into existence indicates that she's a part of the man and that man is not complete without her. As someone has humorously said, "A man is not complete until he's married, and then he's finished."

So, God brings the woman to Adam. This is a very important point for us to note. We're going to come back to this later in the series. Verse 22 says, "And brought her unto the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.'" Adam was not told to go searching for the woman, but God brought her to him. This is the way that the right man meets the right woman to our day still. You don't go around searching and looking for someone. You look to God to bring you together. When your paths do cross and your radar locks around each other, you are identified as the ones whom God has brought together.

When Adam saw the woman, he gave her the name "woman," which really means a female man. When he speaks about "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," he was indicating that he immediately recognized that she was his kind, Homosapiens, and she was the completer of the man. The implication of marriage is indicated in Genesis 2:14: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh." The Hebrew word for "cleave" is "davak," and it means to coalesce, to be joined in spirit, then in soul, and finally in body. This is the order. We want to emphasize that because we'll touch upon that a little later too.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 indicates to us the threefold part of man's being: "The very God of peace sanctify you holy. And I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Man's being is divided into spirit, soul, and body. In his spirit, he has contact with God. This is his area of God consciousness. God deals with him through his spirit. Because man is born dead spiritually, because he has an old sin nature which he inherits from his parents through his father, man does not have a living human spirit when he's born. He's dead spiritually until he comes to regeneration. He comes to a personal acceptance of the death of Christ in his behalf, and he is regenerated. Man does have a soul when he is born, which is the area of his consciousness toward other people. It includes mentality, emotions, will, self-awareness, conscience, and so on. It also, of course, has the area of the body.

A particular man with a particular woman are to be brought together who fit as two right pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. These are not just any two pieces that may be squeezed together approximately to fit. There are a lot of marriages that are like that. Jigsaw puzzle pieces that kind of look like they fit together, and if you squeeze them a little, they manage to get pretty close. However, they're not exact and they're not just right. As time goes by, the fact that the alignment is not perfect becomes more evident. Instead God says you will be joined to one another in an exact conformation.

While there were no in-laws in Eden, there was a principal stated here--that of separation from families after marriage. The married couple is to assume their own responsibility. In marriage there is to be no dependence on the in-laws. Relationship with the in-laws is not to be severed, but responsibility is to be severed from them so the husband and wife form the core of a new family unit to meet the purpose of marriage which is the order and stability in society.

**The Path from Friendship to Marriage**

I want us to think next about the path from friendship to marriage. Everyone's acquainted with the words "falling in love." Friends come and go, and there are little long-range repercussions. Absence from someone, that may have been a good friend for even some period of time, usually brings forgetfulness. But love comes upon us suddenly, as if something that we stumbled over in the dark. It hits us, and we suddenly become aware of an intense attraction of our whole being for someone of the opposite sex. We call this "falling in love." Unlike friendship, this attraction does not lessen with absence. Love has the ability to fill the dullest life with vitality and with noble purpose.

However, there is a problem of the durability of falling in love. That's the first thing I want to warn you about. You can be madly in love with a person and completely cold in a few months or a few weeks' time. The emotions of the soul are influenced by our surrounding circumstances or our self-created illusions. You're at the seashore. You're in a canoe out in the moonlight. You're in some idyllic situation. You're on a cruise, and you are thrown into circumstances that tend to be romantic, and you find yourself falling deeply and emotionally in love with someone, and you think you have found the real choice. Then time goes by and you are amazed to discover that you don't even really like the object of your emotions. This unfortunately is what happens to a lot of marriages. People get married on the basis of having fallen in love. Then they discover that while they have emotional responses toward this person, they don't like this person. There is a difference. However, because of the emotion involved, we are tempted to act quickly and rashly on this powerful impulse of emotional love.

It's possible to be deeply emotionally attached to one who is not a suitable mate. That's what we're saying. It is possible to be deeply emotionally attached to one who is most unsuitable as a marriage partner. Given enough time, we slowly begin to realize just how unsuitable the object of our affections is. So, the thrill of falling in love is not reason enough for marriage. That's human viewpoint of the world. I know that you have been schooled and you have been geared to this kind of thinking, and this is the first thing to put up a red flag in your mind, and to put up a caution to yourself that falling in love, being emotionally stirred toward someone, is not reason enough for proceeding from friendship to marriage. Remember that the right person upon first contact may not stir much emotionally in you at all.

The Bible lays out for us the principle that we all recognize that we love ourselves. Yet there are few of us that would go around saying, "I get a real big thrill and kick out of the fact that I love myself. This is one of the biggest things in my life." Well, we do love ourselves. It creates the quality of self-preservation and so on. Yet, in spite of our deep-seated attachment and affection for ourselves, it's no great big thrill. So, it is possible in the same way to meet the really right person that God has for you without any deep emotional response to begin with. I've had many people tell me that the person that they're very happily married to and who has become a very meaningful partner in life was at first contact someone that didn't interest them at all. So, when it comes to selecting a life partner, you need more than the emotion of falling in love.

**Selecting a Marriage Partner**

You need some biblical guidelines in selecting a partner. It's necessary to have something to guide the emotional intensity with some stable judgment. There's a big difference between being made for each other and falling in love. Many go negative toward the idea of guidelines. Yet when the thrill stage of marriage subsides, they're disillusioned. Why? Because they married for the wrong reasons on the wrong principles on the wrong ideals, and marriage couldn't rise to meet the basis upon which they were married. So, we're going to try to give you some biblical oriented guidelines for selecting a person. You may have a common interest with an individual in spiritual things. Maybe you say that you're both interested in Sunday school work, or mission work. This indicates that God is leading us together. Not so. You may both be interested in any number of things. In the area of professions, you may both want to be musicians or skydivers. This doesn't mean that God is leading you together.

Your souls and your bodies have to fit just as well as your spirits. Remember that God designs a soul for a soul. He designs a body for one specific body. There's an idyllic relationship when the right combination is brought together. Marriage is a decision for major and regular prayer long before you ever meet the right person. If you are a Christian, I commend highly to you that you begin praying right now for the person that God has designed for you, perhaps that you have not yet met, and just pray for that person wherever he or she may be right now, and over the years of your life until the time when God brings you together.

**Two Standards for Marriage**

Please be aware of the fact that there are two standards for marriage. There is the Christian standard which is God's point of view and therefore we call this divine viewpoint. In this view marriage is total commitment of a whole person, a total union of spirits, souls, and bodies, and in that order because that's the order in which God describes our being. Our society reverses this, and we tend to speak of this in the reverse order when we describe how we have been made. We sometimes say, "Body, soul, and spirit." Wrong. It is spirit, soul, and body. The pathway, the journey, from friendship to marriage must follow this threefold stage of our being--spirit, soul, and body.

God has designed one for one. This is a concept within Christian marriage--a particular man for a particular woman. Another concept of the Christian view of marriage is that there is to be chastity before marriage, which includes the engagement stage. After marriage, there is to be faithfulness in matters of physical relationships. Divorce is not permitted in the Christian standard of marriage since marriage is until death. There are one or two reasons biblically that I think justify divorce, but in general it is outside of the Christian standard of marriage.

The other standard of marriage is the world's standard of marriage, which is human viewpoint. This is what people conclude. This is what society accepts. In the human viewpoint, marriage is entered into on the basis of feeling, primarily falling in love. So, any one of any number of men or women will do as partners. When this feeling ceases, there is freedom to follow natural impulses to wherever they may lead and to whomever they may lead. On the world's standard, divorce is an acceptable way out of an unhappy or an ill-advised marriage. Premarital sex is an accepted principle. Multitudes of believers, while having a Christian marriage ceremony, unfortunately think in terms of the world's standard of marriage. We expect unbelievers to do that. We expect better things of Christians. Unfortunately, most Christians are totally ignorant of what the Bible lays forth in principles of the relationship between men and women. Unless a youngster is taught this from early adolescence, he doesn't begin to have a chance to progress in his life before God on principles that are working principles, and that God has designed for our beings to function under.

**The Christian Approach to Marriage**

Now let's look at the Christian approach to marriage. The approach to marriage is very important. It's like landing an airplane successfully. It depends upon setting up the correct approach pattern. Now from the days of early adolescence there's a need for instilling these biblical concepts for a right approach to the opposite sex. Most young people, even Christian young people, because they don't attend churches where the Word of God is preached and where the Bible is explained in realistic useful terms and related to our experience, simply slip into warped attitudes and into behavior patterns that are way out of line, but in keeping with our satanically oriented society. Christian marriage is to be the development of a lifelong intimacy between a right man and his right woman. So, the approach to the opposite sex is to be carefully considered, and it is to be related to the three parts of our being in their biblical order.

**Our Spirit**

We begin with the spirit. The dating stage is to be related to our human spirits. This is the first area in which God joins a man and woman in total oneness. Dating is to be restricted to cultivating spiritual intimacy. The red flags are going up already, and some of you immediately are rejecting and saying, "Oh, that's ridiculous." This is because our society says that dating should be physical. Society says that dating should be a matter of hand-holding, and then progressing from there even to sexual relationships. The physical attraction may be present at the dating stage, and certainly it usually is. But the physical involvement does not have to be. Physical involvement progresses by predictable stages. You begin with hand-holding, and after a while the law of diminishing returns begins to take effect and hand-holding is not the kicks that it used to be. So, you progressed to the next stage, to kissing. Diminishing returns in time takes hold there, and kissing is not enough. So you begin to embrace, and after a while embracing is not enough. That triggers the next stage which is to fondling the erogenic zones of the body. When that is not enough, it carries on to mounting intimacies to full physical union.

Now each of these stages is a stimulus to move us onto the next stage. And this is how God made us. God never created hand-holding to end in hand-holding. *God never created kissing to stop at kissing.* He created hand-holding to move us to kissing, and he created kissing to move us to embracing, and embracing to fondling, and fondling to demanding intimacies. This is the divine order of progression. It's a chain reaction. When passions are thus stimulated and emotions aroused, we may unbelievably get out of all the controls that we think we have even with our most honorable intentions. A sufficient stimulus without ultimate satisfaction produces frustrations and resentments toward the partner. Memory has a way of recalling these resentments even after marriage. They become very deep-seated. It is a fallacy to think that sex life cannot be fully developed without the experience of petting. Love develops into sex--never vice versa. Sex can actually hurt true genuine love. For that reason, God protects love by confining sex to marriage. There's a big difference between friendliness and undue familiarity. It is a wise rule never to do anything in a physical way that you would regret if you should, after all, marry someone else. Remember that you probably are dating someone who is not your right man or your right woman. It is probably someone else's right man or right woman. Your right particular person is probably dating someone else. Therefore, it would be wise for you to treat the person you are dating, who belongs to someone else, as you would like the one who is now dating your partner to treat that one.

There are bitter memories and guilty regrets as the usual heritage of physical involvements while dating other women. You women hold the power of attraction, so you must not invite the advances that are going to strain a man's self-control. It's virtually impossible to make a true judgment of God's will concerning a potential marriage partner once the physical desire has been permitted to be aroused. That really blanks out all the sober judgments that need to be brought. You're just caught up in the whirlwind then of the falling-in-love routine. The dating should not destroy your partner's spiritual well-being, but rather improve it. As a result of your dating a person, if you are a Christian then that partner ought to be enhanced in their spiritual life. So I commend to you the old rule that it is still best that you do not kiss or allow yourself to be kissed until you're engaged. This is the best rule and it really is up to date. The most desirable young women are those who keep all the freshness of their love-making for the one that they will share their life with in marriage. Young men simply should not seek that love-making until they are married.

I should also point out that emotions and hopes may be aroused apart from physical contact. If a man's attentions become too specialized and too frequent at the dating stage, he may unintentionally lead the woman to think that he has marriage in mind. Women are particularly prone to pick up signals that they think they're getting, and to make this conclusion. The flirting woman, on the other hand, may think that she's just acting in fun, but she may be leading a man to unfounded hopes even without any physical involvements.

So, permitting a friendship to become too exclusive is risky. That's the old going steady routine. When you become exclusive you tend to encourage the possibility of a one-sided love affair. One person is more deeply seriously attached than is the other. It is better that you kind of move around with several friends of the opposite sex so that you're not so easily misunderstood. Women easily misinterpret intentions, and they pay for it with great mental suffering and acute disappointment. So, you ought to go slowly, men, in the matters of letter-writing, invitations, and gifts lest you be misunderstood. Don't permit your friendship to develop into a deep romance if marriage is impossible or not advisable for several years. Marriage is a time and capacity consumer that you cannot afford at certain stages of your life. So it is best to declare a certain specific point in your life before which marriage is not to be entertained.

Dating is an adult game, and it is certainly not a legitimate or wise activity for high school kids who don't have built in controls. They need socializing in mixed groups with adult sponsorship present. Parents are therefore responsible to say, "No" to teenagers when it comes to solo dating, or to being in group activities, even if they're run at church as group activities, but in which the kids are paired off. It is poor policy to permit teenage kids even to run around with other teenage kids of either sex. They tend to have a poor influence on one another. *Solo dating is designed to lead to mating. It's an adult game, and it's an exclusively adult game.* It adds no real value to a teenager's development to experience solo dating, and it is fraught with very great hazards.

**Our Souls**

The second stage of our progress from friendship to marriage is related to the area of our souls. This is where engagement fits in. This is the second area in which God joins a man and woman intimately. This involves the coalescence of our minds and wills and emotions--getting to know a person realistically, as far as how they think, their preferences, and their feelings. Man is to be the aggressor. The woman is to be the responder. You find out, "Is this man an aggressor?" You find out about this woman, "Is she a responder?" Or, does she want to play the wrong role? This is the stage to search out compatibility relative to money, doctrine, interests, various views, and your social preferences. What's attractive to you in recreation, sex, goals, and Christian service patterns? Observe each other in a variety of activities under different circumstances. Determine how each one will really be more effective for God if you are married to one another than if you are single.

There is a little more freedom on the physical level once you are engaged. You still must put considerable limitation on physical demonstration. I again remind you of the chain reaction that God has built into us of physical contact and the law of diminishing returns which moves us from one level to the next. Engagement is not a permit for sex. It is still sin within that context. There is a period of danger in which the physical can become the selfish primary drive of the relationship. The physical obsession within engagement will stifle all else on the mind and the emotion on a soul level which should be developing into an intimacy. Repeatedly stopping love expressions short of fulfillment on the physical level may so program your emotions that the physical response is dampened once you are married. You can spoil a courtship during the engagement days by the strain of unfulfilled physical overstimulation. So, put limitations on it at that stage. Engagement is not finally binding. You may decide that it's wise to terminate that engagement and not marry that person after all. You may have discovered, as you proceeded in the relationships of soul-to-soul, that this is not the person for you. Excessively deep physical exchanges make the separation traumatic, and the more deeply you have been involved physically, the bigger is the emotional void. You are prone under that condition to rebound to somebody who is an unwise choice just to take up the slack. The engagement period may in fact prove to need to be much longer than you anticipated. If you get too deeply involved physically, you'll find it very hard to remain stable.

Marriage is primarily a friendship. So you work toward that. It's based on the mental attitude of love, not on sex. Engagement is the point to deepen love for each other in its mental attitude expression as person-to-person and soul-to-soul, not as givers of erotic enjoyment to one another. Any idiot of the opposite sex can become attractive to you and exciting if you can take a few liberties with that person. A lack of godly restraint on physical expressions in engagement proves disastrous to spiritual compatibility. You find that you're petting more and praying less.

I realize that all the influences of our society are against what I'm telling you. The movies, the TV, the press, the conversation, and the humor all teach that the most important aspect of marriage is the physical. That is wrong. They teach that you progress from the physical to the more intangible, and that is wrong. It's a dangerous and insidious lie which leads to the breakup of married life. Petting turns everything upside down, so that the physical becomes greater in importance than the marriage can usually fulfill. It's not easier to return to an earlier stage in courtship and maintain it once you have advanced beyond that stage in the reflex chain. So, don't go too far and too deep because you probably will not be able to return. Take a wise man's advice from his very bitter experiences in the book of Ecclesiastes 3:5. Solomon says, "There's a time to refrain from embracing." That's good advice.

**Our Bodies**

The final stage of progressing from friendship to marriage is to be related to our bodies. This is the third area in the order in which God joins a man and woman in total oneness. And this is the only stage in God's order for full development of physical intimacy. Physical intimacy before marriage will raise a cloud of guilt between a couple and between them and God. It has potential roots of deep bitterness and mistrust. There is coldness in the physical response which often develops as the result of memories that are reviewed. "How did this fella act with me? It was pretty intimate wasn't it? I wonder how many other women he was like that with." There is set up a bitter chain of questions. No one is likely to have cause to regret being too restrained before marriage on the physical level. All that you need to learn in the proper and full expression of physical relationships can very readily and very handily be learned once you are married. You don't need any practice. You don't eat any pre-introduction to it. That's human viewpoint. That's what our society says, but God's viewpoint says that is not so.

So, what we have said here is that the divine institution of marriage has been created by God for man's happiness. Yet, millions of people find marriage a hell on earth situation, if that's possible. The woman was made to be a helper to man, and to be one who completes his being. The pathway from friendship to marriage is what we have considered. This is a path which is more than the emotion of falling in love. That's not enough. The biblical view is that there are certain principles to follow in selecting a partner because God has a particularly special and right partner for you.

There are two standards of marriage. The Christian standard gives you one point of view on marriage, and we've indicated the world's standard is something else. The Christian approach to marriage follows the pattern of the threefold parts of our being. It begins at the dating stage with developing spiritual intimacy, so the physical is simply toned down. There is a minimum of the physical contact. We respect the chain of physical development from hand-holding to kissing to embracing to fondling to the deepest kind of intimate relationships. Each stage we respect as a God-developed stimulus to the next stage. We do not look at these as an end in themselves. From dating, we move on to the engagement stage at which we develop intimacy of soul, getting to know one another in mind and in emotions and in our choices. We place limitations upon being physical in the engagement stage. The final stage of intimacy is the marriage stage. When we are married, that's where the body comes in. Then we have full freedom, the deepest relationships that God has designed for expressing love through sex within marriage. Remember that in the Garden of Eden, sex was first of all recreational, and not primarily for the purpose of propagating children.

So, God will honor you. He will give you a life a blessing if you will honor Him in respecting His guidelines. We thank God for the fact that we have not been left in ignorance but that He has informed us of the pathway from friendship to the thrilling experience of marriage. Marriage has been formed in heaven and not by two people who stumble on earth into a life of tragedy and of sadness. We ask a blessing upon the experience of those who listened to the Word and who considered what we have said. May it be their experience to have the joy of a marriage that has upon it God's blessing.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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