

# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## FAMILY LIFE

### LESSON 2: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’” (Luke 14:28-30)

Too many people jump into marriage without thinking about it much more than a surface consideration. There is a lot to think through and to plan for; being willing to ‘count the cost’ and to make appropriate preparations is crucial as you are making the decision to pursue marriage.

Having a “what’s in it for me?” mentality has no place in a Christian marriage. The world will teach you that, in a relationship, you ought to pursue your heart and do what feels right to you. However, the Word of God uses very different language as it describes loving others.

There are many ways to evaluate how prepared you are for marriage. Some of the areas to consider are your level of sanctification, your ongoing growth in godliness, your personal purity, your expectations of your future spouse, your financial state, and your hopes for a future family.

In the previous lesson, we established that the Lord’s purpose for marriage is to paint a picture of Christ and the Church. He uses marriage as an instrument for our good (our godliness) and for His glory. As such, we ought to approach marriage with a very different type of preparation and intentionality than does the world.

Having a “what’s in it for me?” mentality has no place in a Christian marriage. The world will teach you that, in a relationship, you ought to pursue your heart and do what feels right to you. However, the Word of God uses very different language as it describes loving others. The Bible tells us that “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). If that is true for friends, then how much more so it is true in marriage? Rather than asking “what’s in it for me?” the Christian must ask, “How can I lay down my life for my spouse in my marriage?” Even before that, we must ask in preparation, “Am I ready to serve and love this person?” This is counting the cost. This is preparing for a God-glorifying marriage.

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**Sanctification:** Are you a believer? Are you intent on marrying another believer so far as it depends on you? Can you see that the Lord is making progress in your spiritual life and daily living by the Holy Spirit at work within you?

**Growth in Godliness:** Are you characterized by godliness that will allow you to serve your spouse well and to live according to the precepts in the Word of God? Are you humble and teachable, willing to be corrected from the Word of God?

**Personal Purity:** In thought and in deed, are you preserving your purity (emotional and physical) while you wait for your spouse? Are you striving for holiness in your heart and mind so that your future marriage will be a place of oneness with no competing desires?

**Expectations:** Are you ensuring that your ‘wish list’ for your spouse is based on what the Bible says is valuable? Are you seeking a spouse who loves Christ first and who is pursuing godliness in their own life? Are you seeking a spouse that will help you serve in God’s kingdom and will help

you grow in godliness, rather than simply someone who makes you happy?

**Finances:** Are you being a good steward of the resources that God has given you so that you can provide for your spouse, or not waste the provision you've been given? Are you growing stronger financially, avoiding or removing debt, so that you have good money habits in place when you are ready to get married? Are you willing to collaborate with your future spouse, setting budgets together and working towards financial goals together so that you can use the resources the Lord has given you for His glory first?

**Family Desires:** What is your vision for your family in the future? Have you thought about how many children you would like, if the Lord blesses you with children? Do you have ideas about parenting? Do you have traditions that are important to you to keep and develop in your family? Are you flexible enough to compromise with your spouse on these matters? Have you done any reading or Bible study on the topic of family? Are you praying for someone likeminded on the topic of family?

Christian families should be characterized by sacrificial, others-centered love. This is a real departure from the kind of marriage that the world pursues. When Christians take marriage seriously and work to reflect God's character in how we prepare for, and participate in, marriage, the world will stand up and take notice. A godly marriage is a noteworthy thing and people will ask what your secret is for a happy marriage. What a joy to be able to point to the Father who designed and created this wonderful union for our good and His glory! But this kind of marriage doesn't just happen. Let's be diligent in our preparations 'count the cost' so that we know both what a godly marriage requires and what fruit a godly marriage can bear.

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## IN REVIEW

- Marriage, one of the most significant and life-altering aspects of life, ought not to be entered into lightly, or selfishly. Taking time to count the cost and to make good preparations is of the utmost importance.
- As Christians, it is essential that we seek to understand what marriage looks like according to the Word of God, and not the ways of this world. Our preparation for marriage will be very different from that of our non-believing friends and neighbours.
- When we prepare well and then follow God's ways for marriage, the world will take notice and will be drawn to the beauty of Christ through the pictures that marriage present.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- If you are waiting for marriage, which of the questions for consideration and evaluation were most encouraging for you? Which were most challenging? Pray and ask the Lord to help you prepare in those specific ways.
- If you are already married and are reading this with some regret for how your marriage has begun, take courage knowing that it is not too late to 'count the cost' and to choose to prepare well for the remaining years of your married life. The Lord can restore any broken thing, including your marriage. Seek Him and ask for His guidance and healing.
- If you are in a wonderful, godly marriage, praise Him for His work in your home. Also, ask the Lord to send people and opportunities into your life that give you the chance to glorify His name and to speak of the picture that marriage paints. How can you use your godly marriage as an evangelism tool with those who will look on in wonder, or as a discipleship tool with those who are looking to your example?

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