

MANAGING LIFE SERIES: BEFORE TYING THE KNOT PRT 2

It's awesome to have you again this morning – we have been going through a series titled **MANAGING LIFE IN A CHAOTIC WORLD**. Last week we began to deal with the issue of what to consider before tying the knot, where we looked at God's pattern and progression towards a godly marriage (leave, cleave and one flesh).

When it comes to romantic relationships, every one is consumed by looking for mr or miss right. Rather, be consumed by being mr or miss right. This comes down to preparing yourself for marriage. Many people get into marriage ill-prepared, resulting in either 2 immature people getting married or a mature person marrying an immature individual. Both cases will make it difficult for a healthy marriage to take place.

To the unmarried, you have an opportunity to work on your readiness and to the married, you still have an opportunity to grow yourself into a mature person by applying some of the principles I will be sharing with you. I want to finish off this topic **BEFORE TYING THE KNOT PRT 2** by looking at a few more principles to consider during this phase of your life. We will talk about 2 main principles:

1. How to prepare yourself for marriage

2. How to choose a spouse

Let's jump into this:

1. Pursue personal wholeness before tying the knot.

- This is a lifelong pursuit and personal wholeness is arrived at in stages. The truth is that marriage is not for immature people.

1 Corinthians 13: 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I set aside childish ways.

- For any marriage to work, there is a need for both parties to have attained a level of maturity.
- Personal wholeness needs to happen in 2 dimensions of your life; in your spiritual and emotional dimension.

1.1 Spiritual maturity.

- A healthy marriage is made up of two complete and secure people. A complete and secure person has their identity rooted in Jesus Christ.
- This person knows that Jesus is his ultimate source of satisfaction because true satisfaction can only be found in God.

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John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. (Psalm 107:9)

- In your pre-married years, develop your own personal, deep, and meaningful relationship with Jesus.
- A spiritually immature person will expect their spouse to meet a need that only Jesus can meet – some things will require prayer and not your spouse to deal with. This results in a strained marriage.
- In your pre-married years, learn to seek first the kingdom of God. In those years, find your calling and mission. Your calling and mission will influence the type of person you will get married to.
- In fact, it is in the process of seeking God's kingdom that God will add a spouse to you – "all these things will be added to you".

1.2 Develop a healthy character.

- The more refined your character is before tying the knot the better it is. Many people struggle with lust, or anger, or jealousy and these are issues that you need to work on in order to be ready for marriage.
- None of these issues will vanish because you are married. Marriage is the closest relationship you will ever have here on earth and in it, your character is laid to bare.
- In fact, marriage is one of the instruments that God uses to make us ready for heaven – it is an instrument of sanctification. In marriage, you learn to repent and to die to self, every day.
- For instance, if you are not able to say the most important three words "I am sorry", then you are not yet ready for marriage.

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called, 2 with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

1.3 Build strong relationships with people of the same gender.

- Cleaving to a girlfriend or boyfriend too early on in life, blocks out any possibility of developing other deeper relationships.
- Some levels of maturity can only be achieved by spending more time with people of the same sex.

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- When you get into a marriage without strong relationships, you will need to work way harder as a couple to make good friends.

1.4 Protect the opposite sex from yourself.

- You need to understand how the opposite sex operates and what draws their attention. Girls are drawn by words whereas gents are drawn by what they see.
- A gentleman will protect the ladies by avoid flirtatious comments that are meaningless and vain.

Ephesians 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

- The ladies will protect the gents by dressing modestly – in other words do not expose your skin that should only be reserved for your husband.

1 Timothy 2:9, NIV I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes.

2. Choosing right.

- The choice of a spouse is the most important choice you will ever make, other than choosing to follow Jesus. Marriage is forever – till death do us part and this can be a long time.
- The stakes are too high because you don't have a second chance to choose after you say I do.
- It is possible to choose right – you should look to God for guidance as you go through the process. That is why you should spend some time in prayer when the season comes, to receive insight from God as to what type of a spouse you should be looking for.
- The Bible has various stories when marriages happened and one of those is how Isaac got to marry Rebekah in Genesis 24. I will simply give you scriptures and you can go and read on your own due to time constraints.

2.1 There is a time to find a spouse (Verse 1-4)

- Isaac was around the 40yrs of age when Abraham decided to find him a wife. It means that there is timing to find a spouse. God's timing takes the 3-stage process into account – leaving, cleaving and one flesh.

2.2 Choose a believing spouse (V3 – 9)

- Abraham was strict in telling his servant to find a wife only from his homeland and religion.

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- The principle is that a Christian should only consider marrying another Christian.

2 Corinthians 6: 14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership can righteousness have with wickedness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness?

- A believer will be motivated to be faithful to you because of their fear and love for God.
- Marrying a non-believer will hinder your relationship with God, your calling and ministry.
- If you just marry anyhow, you will spend the rest of your life trying to find each other about the way forward in most things – its about value alignment.

2.3 There will be a testimony in both hearts about the possible union (V7).

- Abraham was confident that God will go before his servant and prepare the heart of the woman to be Isaac's wife.
- When God is in it, He will give both people a testimony in their hearts, even to the closest people to both of you.
- Do not be hasty whenever your spirit man is not at rest (that is why you need to be spiritually mature before looking for a spouse). God will not start talking to you because you about to find a husband – has He been talking to you about other things.

2.4 Remain prayerful right through the process (V12)

- Abraham's servant arrived in the land of Mesopotamia and went to straight to a well - the likeliest of places of finding ladies (be found where you are likely to meet your spouse).
- After settling his camels, the bible said he prayed - *Genesis 24:12 And he said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, I pray You, send me good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.*
- Never neglect prayer as you seek to find a spouse – prayer will pave the way, prayer will cause you to be on the same mission trip, prayer will cause you to be in the same group at a young adults' camp.

2.5 Look for character and not just outside appearances (v13-14).

- Yes, you need to be attracted to this person, but marriage goes beyond looks – marriage is about character.
- Abraham's servant put in place a test of character in which he asked God that the lady who was willing not only to give him water to drink but also to his camels be the one.
- After making this statement, Rebekah came by and did exactly that – she did not only offer him water but went on to water the camels as well.

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- This was not a walk in the park – he had 10 thirsty camels. A typical camel can drink 200 liters (53 gallons) of water in three minutes. This means she probably fetched 2000 litres of water.
- Character is revealed when someone is in their natural environment, doing what they normally do or doing a project.
- Don't look for a spouse at a party – there everyone puts their best foot forward. Find a spouse serving somewhere, where their character is tested and tried.

2.6 Make your intentions known (v22)

- After a close observation, Abraham's servant was satisfied and went ahead to make his intentions known to Rebekah – she received a received a special gift of golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hand, weighing ten shekels of gold.
- She knew straight away that something was going on here. When you have done your homework, you have prayed and all is good to go, don't waste time – go ahead and make your intentions known. It's not time to flirt around – marriage is too important to be leading each other on.

2.7 Don't go at it alone – involve key people (v49-50)

- Choose to do things in a godly and honorable way – let your dating or courtship be above board, to the glory of God.
- This is possible when you create levels of accountability – anything done in the dark is likely to lead to heartache over time.
- Abraham brought the matter to Rebekah's brother Laban and Bethuel to check if they agreed with his proposal. Both men were agreement – this is what they said in verse 50 *"The thing has come forth from Jehovah. We cannot speak to you bad or good"*.
- God will speak to people close to you and will help you to make the right decision.

2.8 When dating, how far is far?

- I have received many questions in this regard. Young people really want to know how far they should go when courting.
- The Bible has no gray areas regarding how far one should go – biblically, sex is exclusively for marriage between a man and a woman.
- Instead of asking "how far should I go", rather ask "how safe can I stay".

1 Corinthians 6:18 "Flee sexual immorality!"

Ephesians 5: 3 "Let there not be even a hint of sexual immorality amongst us"

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- You will also stay safe if you keep to what the word says on how to treat the opposite sex.

1 Timothy 5:1 Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

- This means that touch your girlfriend the way you would touch your sister or mother. Kiss your girlfriend the way you would kiss your sister or your brother.