



KEPT FOR ANOTHER

A Christian's Guide to Courtship
The Ancient Path in an Age of Destruction

*"Ask for the old paths, where is the good way,
and walk therein" — Jeremiah 6:16*

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Offered freely for the glory of God and the building of Christian homes.

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FOREWORD

This book was not written because the author had all the answers. It was written because a generation is perishing for the want of them.

I have watched, over the course of many years of Christian ministry, the quiet devastation that the modern world's approach to love and marriage has produced in the lives of young people who deserved better — young men adrift in a culture that told them they were unnecessary, young women exhausted by a system that promised liberation and delivered loneliness, Christian couples who arrived at the altar having absorbed every assumption of a secular dating culture and wondered, sometimes within months, why the vows they had spoken with such sincerity were so difficult to keep.

I have watched the church largely fail to answer this crisis — not from malice, but from the same cultural absorption that has weakened the church's witness on so many other fronts. Unwilling to appear out of step with the times, reluctant to make demands that might drive away the young people it most wants to reach, the church in too many places has offered a slightly sanitised version of the world's courtship system and called it Christian — and the results have been indistinguishable from the world's results, because the method was indistinguishable from the world's method.

This book is a protest against that failure. It is a call — issued with urgency but, I trust, with love — to the young people of this generation to reject the counterfeit and recover the genuine article. To the young men: to be men. To the young women: to know their worth. To the fathers: to take up the responsibility they were appointed to bear. To the churches: to function as the covenant communities they were constituted to be.

The standard described in these pages is high. It is also entirely achievable — not by human strength, but by the grace of the God who commands what He also supplies. Every principle in this book is grounded in the Word of God, which is the only ground that will hold when the pressures of a fallen world test everything built upon it.

My prayer for every reader — young or old, married or single, parent or child — is that these pages will accomplish what only the Spirit of God can accomplish through the instrument of His Word: the turning of hearts. The turning of the hearts of young men toward godly initiative. The turning of the hearts of young women toward covenant dignity. The turning of the hearts of fathers toward their daughters. And the turning of the hearts of the church toward the generation entrusted to its care.

“Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

The old path is still there. This book points toward it.

Walk therein.

Soli Deo Gloria

PREFACE

Why This Book Was Written, and How to Use It

This book began as a conviction and became a necessity.

The conviction was simple: the modern world's approach to courtship and marriage is producing documented, measurable, generational destruction — and the church of Jesus Christ, which possesses in the Scripture the only complete and coherent alternative to that destruction, has in too many places been silent, accommodating, or confused on the subject.

The necessity arose from observation. In the course of Christian ministry and engagement with the culture, it became impossible to ignore the mounting evidence — statistical, sociological, pastoral, and personal — that an entire generation of young people has been handed a system of courtship that was designed not for their flourishing but for their exploitation, and that the exploitation has been thorough and the flourishing largely absent.

Something needed to be said. This book is the attempt to say it.

What This Book Is

This book is, in its first three chapters, a diagnosis — an honest, research-supported examination of what modern dating, the Red Pill movement, and the online dating industry have produced in the lives of the men and women who have passed through them. The diagnosis is not gentle, because the disease is not mild. But it is offered not in the spirit of condemnation but in the spirit of the physician who must name the illness accurately before he can prescribe the remedy.

From Chapter Four onward, this book is a positive presentation of the biblical alternative — Christian courtship, recovered from the Scripture and described in its practical dimensions across the full range of participants: the young man, the young woman, the father, the church, and the couple together. The final chapter presents the vision toward which the entire book is oriented: the Christian home, built on the foundation of the Word of God, ordered by His design, and sustained by His grace.

What This Book Is Not

This book is not a programme. It does not prescribe a specific sequence of steps, a checklist of courtship milestones, or a rigid formula to be applied identically in every situation. The principles of Scripture are

consistent and non-negotiable; their application will vary with the wisdom, circumstances, and pastoral judgment of those involved.

This book is not an attack on persons. The modern dating system, the Red Pill movement, and the online dating industry are critiqued as systems — as structures that produce predictable and harmful outcomes. The individuals within those systems are not enemies. They are, in many cases, victims — of a culture that gave them no better framework, and of a church that failed to provide one.

How to Use This Book

This book may be read individually, by fathers, by pastors and elders, by couples already in courtship, and by married couples seeking to understand the foundations of their own covenant. Above all, it is offered as a resource to be tested against the Scripture. Every claim it makes is subject to that standard — and every reader is encouraged to bring it there.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

The old path is good. This book exists to help a generation find it.

CHAPTER ONE

The Ruin of a Generation

What Modern Dating Has Wrought

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

— Jeremiah 6:16

There is a wreckage strewn across the landscape of Western civilization that no politician will name, no therapist can fully heal, and no self-help programme has power to reverse. It is not the wreckage of war, nor of famine, nor of pestilence — though those are grievous enough. It is the wreckage of a generation that was handed a counterfeit in place of a covenant, a recreation in place of a relationship, and a feeling in place of a foundation. It is the wreckage that modern dating has made of human souls.

We do not use the word wreckage carelessly. A wreck is what remains after something that was meant to travel safely has been destroyed by collision with what it was never designed to meet. The young man who has given himself serially to women he will never marry — he is wreckage. The young woman who has handed her heart, her trust, and her body to man after man who departed when the novelty faded — she is wreckage. The couple who stood at an altar and recited vows they had no framework to keep, because nothing in their courtship had taught them what covenant love requires — they are wreckage. And the children born into those fractured homes, raised on the residue of adult self-gratification dressed up as romance — they too bear the marks.

Modern dating did not appear suddenly. It was not decreed by any parliament or proclaimed from any pulpit. It crept in gradually, as most corruptions do — first tolerated, then normalized, then celebrated, and at last enshrined as the only conceivable way a man and woman might come to know one another. Its assumptions are now so thoroughly embedded in the cultural air that most young Christians breathe them in without ever examining what they have inhaled.

The Three Assumptions of Modern Dating

The first assumption of modern dating is that romantic and physical intimacy are prerequisites for commitment rather than rewards of it. The culture insists that a man and woman must sample one another — emotionally, and increasingly physically — before they can reasonably decide whether to proceed toward marriage. This is the logic of the consumer, not the logic of the covenant.

The second assumption is that the primary purpose of romantic relationship is personal fulfilment. Modern dating asks, above all else, “Does this person make me happy?” — and when the answer becomes “not sufficiently,” dissolution follows as naturally as night follows day. But the Scriptures present marriage not primarily as a mechanism for personal happiness, but as a picture of Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:25–32), a means of sanctification, and a calling before God.

The third assumption, and perhaps the most corrosive, is that parental authority and community accountability have no legitimate place in the formation of romantic relationships. Modern dating is a wholly private affair between two individuals who recognize no authority above their own desires.

The Statistics Speak What the Culture Will Not

More than half of first marriages in the United States now end in divorce — and second marriages fare measurably worse. Among those who cohabit before marriage, dissolution rates are higher still. The age of first marriage has risen so sharply that an entire generation of young people now inhabits a prolonged adolescence, navigating relationship after relationship with no covenantal framework.

Loneliness, meanwhile, has been declared a public health epidemic. This is the crowning irony of a dating culture that promised intimacy and delivered isolation. When men and women treat one another as interchangeable sources of emotional and physical gratification, they do not build intimacy — they corrode the very capacity for it.

The church has not escaped these figures. Study after study reveals that professing Christians divorce at rates only marginally lower than the surrounding culture. This is not because Christianity has failed. It is because the church, in far too many places, has adopted the world's courtship practices while retaining the world's outcomes.

The Question We Must Ask

When a road is producing consistent wreckage, the honest response is not to improve the guardrails. It is to ask whether the road itself leads where we were promised it would go.

Christian courtship is not a nostalgic programme. It is not a set of rules invented by conservative subculture to police the behaviour of restless young people. It is a recovery of principles that are woven into the very fabric of Scripture's understanding of who man and woman are, what marriage is for, and how a holy God governs the giving and receiving of covenant love.

If the reader is a young person who has already walked some distance down the way of modern dating, let these pages serve not as condemnation but as an invitation — an invitation to stop, to look at the wreckage behind and the ruin ahead, and to hear once more the ancient voice that says: “This is the way, walk ye in it.” (Isaiah 30:21)

The old path is not closed. It is only forgotten. And by the grace of God, it may yet be found again.

CHAPTER TWO

The Marketplace of Men

Red Pills, Impossible Standards, and the War on Ordinary Manhood

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

— Jeremiah 17:9

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.”

— Ecclesiastes 4:9

There is a voice that has risen from the digital ruins of the modern dating catastrophe — a voice that claims to speak truth to a generation of young men who have been battered, confused, and discarded by the very system the previous chapter described. It calls itself the Red Pill. And like most successful lies, it has wrapped itself around a kernel of observable fact.

Understanding this movement is not optional for the Christian who wishes to counsel young men, to raise sons wisely, or to think clearly about the marriage crisis of our age. The Red Pill does not speak from a vacuum. It speaks from real pain, real rejection, and real confusion.

The 80/20 Doctrine

At the centre of Red Pill ideology stands what its adherents call the 80/20 rule: the claim that eighty percent of women compete for the attention of the top twenty percent of men, leaving the remaining eighty percent of men largely invisible in the sexual marketplace.

The rule draws its intellectual framework from the economic Pareto Principle, but applies it to human desire. It finds at least partial corroboration in the data generated by modern dating applications. An analysis of major dating platform data found that women rated approximately eighty percent of male profiles as below average in attractiveness. This asymmetry is striking, and its effect upon the men who encounter it is crushing.

The Red Pill's prescription is the relentless pursuit of physical fitness, financial dominance, social status, and psychological manipulation. What the Red Pill will not acknowledge is the mathematical impossibility of its own prescription. The top twenty percent, by definition, cannot be enlarged.

The Education Inversion

There are now 2.4 million more female than male undergraduates on American campuses. Women graduate from college at higher rates than men and now earn forty percent more doctoral degrees overall. This transformation has directly reordered the landscape of marriage.

The reason is hypergamy — the well-documented and cross-culturally consistent preference among women to partner with men of equal or greater status. Research spanning forty-five countries confirmed that women, more than men, prefer partners with stronger financial prospects. When a college-educated woman looks for a partner of equal or greater educational standing, she now faces a shrinking pool.

What the Red Pill Gets Right — and Where It Goes Wrong

The Red Pill is correct that the modern dating marketplace is structurally hostile to ordinary men. It is correct that women's preferences tend toward status and provision. But from these accurate observations, it draws conclusions that are both spiritually ruinous and practically self-defeating.

Its first error is to treat the woman as an adversary to be outmanoeuvred rather than as an image-bearer of God to be honoured and loved. Its second error is to accept the premises of the very system it claims to critique. Its third and deepest error is theological: it locates the crisis everywhere except in the heart of man himself.

Here is what the Scripture never says: that a man must achieve the top twenty percent of income before he is fit to pursue a wife. It says, instead: "He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD" (Proverbs 18:22). The standard is moral, not financial. It is covenantal, not competitive.

CHAPTER THREE

The Digital Marketplace of Love

Online Dating, Social Media, and the Commodification of Human Souls

“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.”

— Proverbs 14:15

“For the love of money is the root of all evil.”

— 1 Timothy 6:10

From Traditional Dating to the Digital Bazaar

It did not begin with a swipe. It began with a reasonable-sounding idea: modern life is busy, the traditional means by which men and women had always found one another had been dismantled, and technology could provide the solution.

What followed was not refinement but proliferation. App after app entered the market. Tinder arrived in 2012, introducing the swipe — a gesture borrowed from the logic of sorting consumer goods — and the landscape of human mating was permanently altered. By 2024 the dating app market was worth \$6.18 billion globally, with a single corporation — Match Group — generating \$3.5 billion in annual revenue controlling platforms including Tinder and Hinge.

Instagram: The Unofficial Dating App

Data now shows that Instagram has become the most popular platform for meeting and communicating with a potential partner. Single adults are shifting away from dedicated dating apps — increasingly burned out by their mechanics — and turning to social media, with Instagram leading the migration.

A study found that two in five young people now say they met their partners through social media, compared to twenty-nine percent who met through dedicated dating apps. Instagram has become, in the logic of modern dating, the background check, the first impression, and the final court of appeal — all in one scrollable grid.

The Architecture of the Trap

The dedicated dating applications were not designed to help their users find love. They were designed to keep their users searching for love — which is an entirely different objective. They turned romance into a subscription trap, extracting maximum revenue through predatory pricing, algorithmic manipulation, and business models that profit most when users stay single, frustrated, and willing to pay.

On Tinder, approximately 76-78% of users are male. On Hinge, 64% are male. Men on Hinge have a match-to-like ratio of approximately 3% — one match for every 33 likes. Women experience a ratio of approximately 35%. Men are significantly more likely to spend money on dating apps than women, often with minimal return — a financial disparity that reflects a deeper reality: on these platforms, men are being exploited.

The man who, upon joining, is average-looking and generates lower engagement finds his profile buried. The app then sells him paid upgrades — Boosts, Super Boosts — to temporarily escape the algorithmic suppression it engineered. This is not a marketplace of love. It is a marketplace of manufactured inadequacy, selling remedies for wounds it inflicted.

The Social Media Idol

Instagram does not show you who someone is. It shows you who someone wishes you to believe they are. A relationship built upon the foundation of two curated performances meeting one another across a screen is not a relationship at all — it is a collision of fictions.

You cannot swipe your way to a covenant. You cannot algorithmically optimize your path to a home built on the fear of God. The young Christian who understands this is freed — freed from the exhausting performance of the curated self, freed from the dehumanizing logic of the swipe, freed to pursue the ancient, dignified, accountable path by which godly men and women have always found one another: in the presence of family, under the oversight of the church, in the fear of God, face to face.

CHAPTER FOUR

What Is Courtship?

The Ancient Path Recovered

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

— Jeremiah 6:16

“He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.”

— Proverbs 18:22

What Courtship Is Not

Courtship is not a set of rules invented by homeschool subculture in the 1990s. It is not a system in which a young woman sits passively at home while her father screens applicants like a medieval gatekeeper. It is not a guarantee of emotional safety, relational compatibility, or marital happiness. It is not a higher-class version of dating with the physical boundaries moved earlier in the timeline.

A Definition

Christian courtship, rightly understood, is the intentional, accountable, and purposeful pursuit of marriage between a man and a woman, conducted under the authority of the family and the oversight of the church, in accordance with the principles of Scripture, with the glory of God as its governing aim.

Intentional: a man who enters courtship does so with marriage as his declared objective. Accountable: courtship does not happen in secret but before parents, before the church, before those who love both parties. Purposeful: every aspect is governed by conscious purpose rather than feeling. Under the authority of the family: the father is a genuine authority, not a peripheral formality. Under the oversight of the church: the local church is not an optional extra. With the glory of God as its governing aim: Christian courtship is not, at its core, a strategy for finding a spouse. It is an act of worship.

The Biblical Pattern

The Scripture provides a consistent set of principles that yield a pattern recognizably different from anything the modern world proposes. The man takes initiative — rooted in the created order itself. The woman is given,

not seized — the giving of a daughter in marriage is an act of her father. Marriage is the goal from the beginning. The community is involved.

Courtship and Dating: The Defining Differences

Modern dating begins with attraction and hopes that character will follow. Courtship begins with the assessment of character and allows attraction to develop within that foundation. Modern dating is private. Courtship is accountable from the outset. Modern dating has no declared purpose. Courtship has marriage as its declared purpose from the first moment of pursuit. Modern dating serves the self. Courtship serves God.

The young person who enters Christian courtship enters, paradoxically, a larger freedom — the freedom of known purpose, clear intention, accountable progress, and the protection of those who love them. “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

CHAPTER FIVE

The Father's Role

Guardian, Shepherd, and the Giver of His Daughter

“Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?”

— The Ancient Custom

“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.”

— Proverbs 31:28

The Father the Modern World Abolished

The modern world did not merely diminish the father's role in the courtship of his children. It abolished it — deliberately, systematically, and with the full endorsement of a culture that reframed paternal authority as patriarchal oppression and the protection of daughters as the control of women.

The Christian father who reads this chapter must understand: the recovery of his proper role in his daughter's courtship is not optional. It is a biblical duty — and the abdication of that duty, however socially comfortable, is a sin against God and a wound inflicted upon the daughter he was appointed to protect.

What the Scripture Establishes

The biblical case for the father's authority in the courtship and marriage of his daughter is woven through both Testaments with a consistency that makes it impossible to dismiss as cultural artifact. In the Old Testament, the giving of a daughter in marriage is consistently presented as a paternal prerogative. The New Testament does not abolish this structure. It deepens it.

The Three Offices of the Father

As Guardian, the father's first responsibility is protection. He stands between his daughter and the world of men who would approach her, functioning as the first line of discernment — asking the questions she may be too emotionally invested to ask, seeing the patterns she may be too inexperienced to recognise.

As Shepherd, the father is responsible for his daughter's preparation for marriage long before any particular young man appears on the horizon. He teaches his daughter, by word and by the example of his own

marriage, what a godly husband looks like.

As Giver, the father's climactic function is the formal giving of his daughter in marriage — the act by which he transfers his guardianship to another man who has been found worthy of the trust. This is a covenantal act of the highest order.

The Father's Own Preparation

The father who wishes to exercise these responsibilities faithfully must himself be a man of God. He cannot shepherd a daughter toward a godly marriage if his own marriage is a wreckage. He cannot evaluate a young man's spiritual character if his own walk with God is nominal.

The turning of the fathers' hearts to their children — this is among the great works of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer in every genuine revival of Christianity. And it is among the most urgently needed works in the church of our generation. The daughter who has such a father is not constrained. She is blessed.

CHAPTER SIX

The Young Man's Duty

Initiative, Character, and the Weight of Pursuit

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

— 1 Corinthians 16:13

“He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.”

— Proverbs 18:22

The Duty of Readiness

Before a young man has any business approaching a father, he must first reckon honestly with a question the modern world has conspired to make easy to avoid: Am I ready? Readiness begins in the soul. The man who is not walking with God is not ready for courtship regardless of his income, his social standing, or the warmth of his personality.

Readiness extends to character: how does he treat his mother, handle money, respond to authority? How does he behave when no one is watching? Readiness includes provision: the Scripture is plain — “if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8).

The Duty of Initiative

Having established that he is ready, the young man faces the second great duty: he must act. The passivity of modern men is one of the most remarked-upon and least-addressed phenomena of contemporary Christian culture. This passivity is not humility. It is not patience. It is not discernment. In most cases it is fear, selfishness, or the absence of genuine conviction.

When a young man has resolved upon action, the order is clear: he goes to the father first. The approach to the father is not a formality. It is the first act of courtship — and the manner in which he conducts it will reveal more about his character than almost anything that follows.

The Model of Boaz

The Scripture provides, in the person of Boaz, one of its most complete portraits of a man conducting himself with the full weight of biblical manhood in the pursuit of a wife. He notices Ruth before he speaks to her — and his first response is inquiry, not approach. He speaks to her with honour and protection. He acknowledges her character before he declares his interest. When the time comes for the covenantal transaction, Boaz conducts it publicly, before witnesses, in the gate of the city. And having determined to act, he moves without hesitation.

The Charge

Young man, you live in a generation that has told you that masculinity is toxicity, that initiative is aggression, and that the best thing you can do is wait. Do not believe it.

God made you to act. He made you to pursue, to bear weight, to take responsibility, to stand before a father and declare your intentions, to lead a woman through a courtship conducted in the fear of God. “He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” (Proverbs 18:22) Go. Prepare yourself. Find a good thing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Young Woman's Duty

Guarding the Heart, Godly Femininity, and the Worth of a Daughter of the King

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

— Proverbs 31:10

“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”

— Proverbs 31:30

The Duty of Preparation

The young woman who will one day make a godly wife is not produced overnight. She is formed — slowly, deliberately, over years of faithful preparation. Preparation begins with the cultivation of the fear of the LORD. The young woman who fears the LORD is developing the one quality that no amount of physical beauty can replicate and no amount of its absence can diminish.

Preparation extends to character, domestic competence, and the cultivation of wisdom about men — not the cynical wariness that the modern world produces in women who have been wounded, but the discerning wisdom of a woman who knows what she is looking for and cannot easily be deceived by the performance of godliness in a man whose life does not bear its fruit.

The Duty of Guarding the Heart

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) The female heart is, by the design of God, peculiarly vulnerable to the specific form of emotional investment that romantic relationship generates. This is not a weakness. It is part of the design of a woman made for covenant.

Guarding the heart means not investing emotionally in a relationship before that relationship has a covenantal framework. It means governing the imagination. It means being honest about emotional momentum, maintaining enough emotional sobriety to see clearly throughout the courtship.

The Model of Ruth

The Scripture provides in Ruth one of its most luminous portraits of a young woman conducting herself with the full weight of godly femininity in the most difficult of circumstances. She is not passive. She chooses loyalty over comfort. She works. She acts on Naomi's counsel with trust and courage. And she waits — having acted appropriately, she trusts the process.

Active and restrained. Courageous and modest. Discerning and trusting. A woman who knows what she is worth, who acts within the proper order, and who ultimately receives what God has prepared for her.

Your Worth Is Not Determined by Whether He Chooses You

The young woman who has absorbed the logic of the modern world has been trained to locate her worth in whether she is chosen. The Scripture will not allow it.

Your worth was established before a single man ever noticed you — established by a God who formed you in His image, who knew you before you were born, and who gave His Son for your redemption. That worth is not increased by male attention and it is not diminished by its absence. “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.” (Proverbs 31:10) You are a daughter of the King. Conduct yourself accordingly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Purity in the Process

Emotional and Physical Boundaries in Christian Courtship

“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”

— 1 Corinthians 6:18

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

— 1 Thessalonians 4:4

The Theological Foundation

The foundation of sexual purity in Christian courtship is not prudishness. It is theological — rooted in the nature of man, the design of marriage, and the character of the God who made both. The sexual union of a man and a woman is not merely a physical act. It is a covenantal act — a one-flesh union (Genesis 2:24) that binds together not merely two bodies but two souls, two histories, two futures.

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Physical Purity

The standard is not ambiguous: sexual intercourse outside of marriage is fornication, and the Scripture forbids it without qualification. The principle is escalation. Physical intimacy, by its nature, does not remain stationary. The couple that sets their boundary at everything short of intercourse has not guarded purity. They have simply identified the point at which they intend to stop in circumstances of maximum temptation.

The wiser counsel — consistent with the spirit of the Scripture’s flee fornication rather than merely resist fornication — sets the boundary at a point sufficiently removed from the line of failure that the momentum of escalation cannot carry the couple across it in an unguarded moment. Never be alone together in a private space. Establish and communicate boundaries explicitly and early. Maintain accountability with the father and with the church.

Emotional Purity

Emotional purity is the guarding of the deepest levels of personal intimacy for the relationship to which it properly belongs: marriage. The late-night phone calls of unlimited duration, in which two people progressively dismantle every wall, are emotional escalation operating by exactly the same logic as physical escalation.

The couple that is answerable to no one for the physical and emotional conduct of their courtship is a couple operating without the guardrail that accountability provides.

The Grace That Meets Failure

Some who read these pages will not be reading them with a clean history. To those readers, the Scripture speaks not with condemnation but with the gospel: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1)

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.” (Hebrews 13:4) The couple that arrives at their wedding day having honoured God with their bodies and their hearts arrives with something that cannot be purchased, manufactured, or recovered once it is lost: a clean conscience, and the full, joyful, uninhibited freedom of two people giving themselves to one another for the first time. That is worth the cost of purity. Every time.

CHAPTER NINE

The Cost of Waiting

What the Modern World Isn't Telling Young Women

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

— Proverbs 31:10

“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.”

— Proverbs 19:14

What the Numbers Reveal

The data on career success and marriage tells a story of a profound and troubling asymmetry. For men, professional success and marriage move in the same direction. For women, under the modern system, they have been set against one another.

Among men, the lowest earners are least likely to be married — only twenty percent — while the highest earners are most likely, at sixty-one percent. For women, research published in *Evolution and Human Behavior* found that income is not meaningfully associated with the probability of marriage — and is actually positively associated with the probability of divorce. High-income women are less likely to remarry after divorce, and more likely to be childless than lower-income women.

A Swedish study found that in three out of four professions examined, successful women had higher divorce rates than their less successful counterparts. In America, Census data reveals that female breadwinners represent just sixteen percent of all households yet account for forty-two percent of divorces.

The Childlessness Crisis

Between a third and a half of all successful career women in the United States do not have children. Among business executives, doctors, lawyers, and academics in the 41-55 age bracket, thirty-three percent are childless — rising to forty-two percent in corporate America. The vast majority of these women did not choose childlessness. They yearned for children, and many went to extraordinary lengths in medical intervention — mostly without success, because these efforts came too late.

The 2022 General Social Survey found that married mothers report greater happiness than single childless women, married childless women, and unmarried mothers alike. Not the most credentialed women. Not the highest-earning women. Married mothers.

The Proverbs 31 Woman

Yes — the Proverbs 31 woman buys land, plants vineyards, and trades in the marketplace. By any measure she is a businesswoman of extraordinary industry. But here is what the modern reading conspicuously omits: the ordering of her life.

Her business activity does not precede her household — it flows from it, serves it, and is governed by it. “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.” (Proverbs 31:27) This is the precise inversion of the modern ideal. The modern prescription tells a young woman to make career her primary identity. The Proverbs 31 woman makes her household her primary identity and her foundation from which her considerable industry flows outward.

What the Prudent Woman Understands

“A prudent wife is from the LORD” (Proverbs 19:14). Not a wealthy wife. Not a credentialed wife. A prudent wife — one who orders her life according to wisdom rather than cultural fashion. The modern world’s promise — build yourself first and marriage will follow — has left a trail of professional trophies and empty nurseries wide enough to constitute a rebuke from history.

“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” (Proverbs 31:30)

CHAPTER TEN

Discerning Character

How to See Clearly When Your Heart Is Involved

“By their fruits ye shall know them.”

— Matthew 7:20

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

— Jeremiah 17:9

The First Principle

The single most important principle of character discernment in courtship is this: the person you are evaluating is not primarily the person who shows up for your courtship interactions. It is the person who exists in the unguarded ordinariness of daily life — at home, at work, under pressure, in conflict, in disappointment, in the company of people who can do nothing for them.

The wise person in courtship deliberately and systematically seeks information about the other party's character in contexts outside the courtship performance. The father, the pastor, the employer, the friends — these people possess a quality of knowledge that the young woman cannot acquire in any number of courtship conversations.

What to Look For

The fear of God is the foundation upon which every other quality either rests or collapses. It is evidenced in the consistent pattern of a life — in whether the person reads and submits to the Word of God as a governing authority over their actual decisions. In whether they are honest when honesty costs them something.

Integrity in speech, the handling of money, the treatment of family, and the response to conflict and disappointment — each of these is a window into the soul. Character is most clearly revealed not in prosperity but in adversity. How a person responds when things go badly is more revealing than how they behave when life is comfortable.

Red Flags That Must Not Be Explained Away

Isolation from accountability. Inconsistency between public and private conduct. A pattern of broken relationships in which every rupture is attributed entirely to the other party. Anger expressed as verbal aggression, contempt, or emotional coercion. Spiritual immaturity masked as spiritual enthusiasm — the man who speaks fluently about theology but whose daily life evidences none of the fruit of genuine godliness.

Sufficient Time

Character discernment requires time. Not infinite time, but sufficient time for the performance of early courtship to relax, for the ordinary pressures of real life to surface, and for the patterns that define a person's character to become visible across a range of circumstances.

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” (Matthew 7:24) Build on the rock. Take the time. See clearly.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Church's Place

Covenant Community, Pastoral Oversight, and the Body That Builds Marriages

“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

— Proverbs 11:14

“Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.”

— Hebrews 13:17

What the Church Actually Is

The local church is the assembly of regenerate believers, covenanted together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, governed by the Word of God, under the oversight of elders, gathered regularly around the preaching of the Word, and mutually accountable to one another in the pursuit of godliness. It is the body of Christ — a living organism in which every member has a function, a responsibility, and a legitimate claim upon the care and counsel of every other.

The elder who takes no interest in the courtships developing within his congregation, who offers no counsel, exercises no oversight, and provides no accountability, is failing to watch for souls.

What the Church Provides That Nothing Else Can

The local church, functioning as the Scripture describes, provides genuine, longitudinal knowledge of character within covenant community. It knows its members over time, under pressure, in service, and in worship. This accumulated, multi-dimensional, longitudinal knowledge is the unique gift that the covenant community brings to the courtship process.

The Practical Roles of the Church

The church as the context of introduction: the young man and woman who worship in the same congregation begin their potential courtship with an incomparable foundation of mutual knowledge. The church as the source of counsel: the pastor's counsel is the voice of a man who watches for souls. The church as the structure of accountability: the couple in courtship who are answerable to their pastor for the conduct of their relationship

are under protection, not oppression. The church as the witness of the covenant: the congregation that gathers around the couple at the altar bears genuine responsibility to the couple whose covenant they have witnessed.

The Church That Produces Godly Marriages

The church that takes seriously its role in the courtship and marriage of its members is not a church that has added a singles ministry to its calendar. It is a church that has understood something more fundamental: that the health of its marriages is a direct reflection of the health of its community life.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

CHAPTER TWELVE

Building the Christian Home

The Covenant House That Stands

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.”

— Psalm 127:1

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

— Joshua 24:15

The Lord Must Build It

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” (Psalm 127:1) This verse is not a sentiment. It is a declaration of absolute dependence. The Christian home will stand or fall on the single question of whether the LORD is its builder. Not the couple’s compatibility. Not their communication skills. Not their financial stability. These things matter — but they are the materials of the house, not its foundation.

The couple who begins their marriage by establishing from the first day the practice of family worship, of daily reading of the Scripture together, of regular prayer as a household, has laid the one foundation upon which everything else will rest.

The Structure of the Christian Home

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.” (Ephesians 5:23) The headship of the husband is not a licence for tyranny. The model of headship the Scripture provides is the headship of Christ over the church — defined entirely by self-giving love, sacrificial service, and the willing laying down of life for the one entrusted to his care.

The wife’s submission to this headship is not degradation. It is a picture of the church’s willing submission to Christ — voluntary, dignified, and rooted not in the husband’s worthiness but in the wife’s reverence for God. The Christian home ordered by this structure is a home of complementary callings, not competing authorities.

The Domestic Church

The Christian home is a domestic church — a little congregation within the larger congregation, a place where the worship of God, the reading of His Word, the formation of souls, and the practice of godliness are conducted daily in the context of the most intimate human community.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

The Legacy

The Christian home built on these foundations builds a legacy — a multigenerational inheritance of faith, character, and covenant faithfulness that outlasts the lives of those who established it. Children raised in genuinely Christian homes receive a formed imagination — a deep sense of what a household ordered by the fear of the LORD looks, feels, sounds, and smells like.

It begins with a young man who fears God and pursues a wife honourably. It begins with a father who guards his daughter and gives her wisely. It begins with a young woman who guards her heart and conducts herself with the dignity of a daughter of the King. It begins with a church that takes its covenant seriously. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” Let the LORD build it. And let it stand.

CONCLUSION

A Call to Action: Choose the Old Path

You have reached the end of this book. But you have not reached the end of the matter — because the matter is not a subject to be finished with. It is a path to be walked.

To the Young Man

You were made for more. You were made to pursue, to provide, to protect, to lead, and to lay down your life for a woman who will become, under your covenant headship, more than she could ever have been without you. “Quit you like men, be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13) The world needs men who will build. Be one of them.

To the Young Woman

You are worth more than rubies. Not because of what you have accomplished, but because of who made you and what He paid for your redemption. Fear the LORD. The rest will follow. “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” (Proverbs 31:30)

To the Father

Your daughter needs you — not as a formality, not as a ceremonial presence at a wedding, but as the active, engaged, prayerful, discerning shepherd that God appointed you to be from the day she was born. “He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children.” (Malachi 4:6) Let your heart be turned. Your daughter is waiting.

To the Pastor and Elder

You watch for souls. That is not a metaphor — it is your calling, and it will one day be your account. Take the courtships of your congregation seriously. Know your young people. Create the conditions in which honest counsel can be sought and honestly given. “For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.” (Hebrews 13:17) Watch well.

To Every Reader

The ruins of the modern courtship system are real. The wreckage is vast. But ruins are not the last word. They never have been for the people of God. He is building. And what He builds stands. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” (Psalm 127:1) Ask Him to build yours. Stand in the ways. See. Ask for the old paths. And walk therein.

Soli Deo Gloria

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