

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

SATURDAY NIGHTS OR SUNDAY MORNINGS?

Marriage is honorable (Hebrews 13:4). The physical union of man and woman is both serious and significant. Created because of man's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, marriage is, indeed, sacred. Despite the fact that some of every generation have attempted to mock it, minimize it, and even destroy it, marriage is a blessing that provides for the most precious and unique of all earthly relationships.

Since marriage is to be entered into with such caution and concern, it stands to reason that the process by which we select a marriage partner should be God-guided. As societies have changed, so have the processes of mate selection. Even today, different areas of the world have different practices for this process. In America, the most common form of mate selection is called dating.

Sadly, many of the actions of teenagers and young adults involved in the dating process are neither wholesome nor godly. Many Christian young people have chosen "Saturday night" over "Sunday mornings" in the name of dating. May we offer a few suggestions for the dating Christian? The Biblical suggestions will keep a person pure on Saturday night so that he or she will not have to be ashamed come Sunday morning.

Date with Purpose

The value of most actions can easily be seen in the purpose that drives those actions. There are a number of different purposes for dating. Some date in order to get to know another person. Sitting across the table at dinner can provide great conversation time to learn about a person's past, their goals, their faith, etc. Some date for the recreational enjoyment it provides. Enjoying the company of another and developing mutual interests can create a bond that will last a lifetime. In fact, if there are no mutual interests or if there is no common ground, it is noticeable from the very beginning of a dating relationship. Learning whether or not two people are compatible is a noble purpose for dating. Although most teenagers are not looking to get marriage for many years, dating for these reasons reveals a noble usage of the dating process.

On the other hand, some date for many reasons that are not nearly as noble. Some date for the prestige factor. Let's face it, there are various social circles that are hard to break into, especially in the teenage years. Dating a particular young man might give a young lady a "boost" in rankings (and vice versa). Some date out of jealousy or revenge. If their former dating partner has someone new, they must find someone also. Neither of these two above reasons for dating are in keeping with the "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12) or many other Bible principles. Christians should not date with these purposes in mind.

Some date simply for sexual purposes. For many, dating is merely a gateway to sex. Sadly, the perception that a guy may only "be after one thing" is all too true in the dating world today. Today it is considered abnormal to be in a dating relationship with someone of the opposite sex and not be sexually active. Parents, if you believe this is the world's problem and that such purposes for dating are not found among "church goers," you are misinformed. While statistics show that sexual activity in "religious" young people is found with less frequency, it has been reported that one out of every four "Christian" young people will not be pure when they go to the marriage altar.

Young people, date with a noble purpose and be aware that not everyone will share your convictions. Keep your Saturday nights pure so that your worship on Sunday morning will not be hindered.

Date with Prayer

Prayer works (James 5:19). We ought to use the access we have to the ear and heart of our Creator when we are troubled, discouraged, doubting, anxious, and bur-

FINDING FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Text: _____

I. Finding Fulfillment in _____

Notes:

II. Finding Fulfillment in _____

Notes:

III. Finding Fulfillment in _____

Notes:

IN CHRIST YE ARE...

Text: _____

I. In Christ Ye Are _____

Notes:

II. In Christ Ye Are _____

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III. In Christ Ye Are _____

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IV. In Christ Ye Are _____

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V. In Christ Ye Are _____

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dened. We should also use this powerful privilege when a great challenge is placed in our path. What greater challenge does a person have than choosing a spouse? What greater power does a person need working for him in this pursuit than the God of heaven? Set aside the fact that in His matchless power He spoke the world into existence and brought Christ out of the grave that in His matchless power He spoke the world into existence and brought Christ out of the grave to sit against at His right hand. Just understanding that God was the designer and creator of the marriage relationship should cause a man to solicit God's help in choosing his life-long partner.

Prayer should also find a constant place in the date itself. Taking the time to pray to God (for safety as you travel, for the blessing of food that you enjoy together, for self-control in situations that are tempting, etc.) will remind those who are dating that they will give account for the actions of that particular night. Calling God to the center of the date through prayer is a way of emphasizing to the one you're with that God comes first. Dating with prayer might help in avoiding situations that seem uncontrollable.

May I suggest that a few more prayers offered on Saturday night will only make out prayers on Sunday morning more meaningful?

Date with Prejudice

I am not suggesting that a person's skin color or nationality should be a determining factor in who one chooses to date or marry. In fact, I am amazed at and disappointed in Christians who condemn inter-racial relationships. If there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ, then we should not demand there be a distinction when it comes to marriage. In this way, our society has become more accepting. Hopefully, the church will continue to do the same.

However, there are some prejudices (I.e. opinions formed beforehand) that we ought to carry into the marriage relationship. Before we begin dating, with the help of Scripture, we ought to form our opinions about matters like moral, limitations, reputation, and expectations. As long as those opinions are godly and wholesome they should never be compromised for anyone at any time. It does not matter if she has blond hair and blue eyes or if he is the captain of the football team. A Christian should have a standard! That standard should be decided before a young person goes on their very first date.

The truth is, the choice does not have to be between Saturday nights and Sunday mornings. A Christian can have both. So long as those Saturday activities are guided by the One we worship on Sunday mornings! May God give our young people wisdom in making this choice!

-Wayne Jones

THE BOOK OF HOPE

While the Jews garner most of the blame for persecution rendered on the first century church, the truth is that they were not alone. In addition to the Jews, Christians had to contend with pagans who had no moral or religious standard and thus thought Christianity to be utter foolishness because it emphasized a standard of godliness. It was unto various Christians scattered abroad subject to such vengeful persecutions that Peter penned his first epistle in order to instill in them hope amidst troubling times. *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied”* (I Peter 1:1-2). And would Peter not be one who had credibility along these lines in the sight of the brethren. Yes, during his association with Jesus he was sometimes sporadic distributing a character of impetuosity, courage, restlessness, and ambition; but since time as he worked as an apostle and evangelist he had more often than not been brave, energetic, patient, trustful, and loving. He himself had suffered as a Christian and was able to overcome through hope. Thus it is that which gave him strength that he now relates to others who were in danger of sinking in the depths of trial.

To a people facing such opposing odds, though, is it possible to enjoy any degree of hope? The world did and does have a strong influence among even dedicated children of God, and if that sense of worldliness is able to stabilize a stronghold in someone’s life what power can that person exhibit over it? Hope is a common theme throughout the Bible and especially the New Testament. The word itself occurs in the New Testament alone fifty-three times in various contexts, and often is used to refer to the hope we have in Christ. In fact, twice in the book of Romans, Paul gives excellent expositions regarding Christian hope. For example, in Romans 5:1-11, Paul discusses the love of God which made possible the sacrifice of Christ that provided the great justification from sin, and ultimately it is that justification that gives us hope in looking toward eternity. So the clear position of the Bible is that hope is possible, but only in Jesus Christ. Thus it is now in turning back to I Peter that we notice what Christ offers in order to provide this hope that those brethren needed in their situation, and the hope that all Christians need in the midst of their lives.

First, the hope we have is the salvation we can enjoy in Christ. To those in the depths of tribulation the understanding that it is but temporary is a comfort. One day all of the trouble that the world heaps upon our shoulders will cease. But the hope we have is that our glory will last forever. To those poor souls under increased pressure, Peter wrote about the great inheritance and treasure made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which begets every child of God unto a lively hope (I Peter 1:3-5). Yes, we will suffer in this life because of our conviction, but one day that will end, and forevermore will we enjoy the gracious blessings of our God in heaven above.

Second, our hope is increased as we grow spiritually and live faithfully in the sight of God. Peter encouraged those brethren to desire the milk of the word that provides the growth so desperately needed in every life. As we then submit ourselves to that word a number of truths will be revealed to us that makes us appreciate that hope all the more. And then by living faithfully, the hope is secured whereby we then may enjoy it without fear.

Third, that hope is going to cause us to live a life of honor before Christ. What earnest soul bought and purchased by the blood of Christ is not truly appreciative of that sacrifice? That appreciation is going to instill within the heart of that individual a deep desire to honor Christ by everything they do and everything they say. In I Peter 3:8ff, Peter provides some divine suggestions by which man can honor Jesus Christ. By giving heed to that counsel, we can look forward to one day having our soul eternally quickened unto life.

Fourth, the hope we enjoy is going to lead to suffering in our lives. That was the situation in which these Christians found themselves, and such will be the case with every child of God openly living Christianity. Important to understand is the fact that suffering is not uncommon to any of us. But we should rather rejoice that we can be partakers of Christ’s sufferings (I Peter 4:12-13). *“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator”* (I Peter 4:19).

Then fifth, this hope enjoyed is made possible by the true grace of God. What hope might this provide? By simply stating the source of hope one might believe that no further comfort is being administered. However, by citing the grace of God as being eternal, then is the hope provided by that grace also understood to be eternal. That grace is eternal (I Peter 5:10), and thus our hope is eternal as well. And if that is not a statement of great comfort, then surely we are comfortless.

The specifics may be different, but the application will forevermore remain the same. We as children of God maintain hope in Christ regardless of the trials and tribulations the world may heap upon us. Accept that hope, abide in that hope, and forevermore enjoy that hope because of what our gracious God has done for us all.

-Andy Brewer