

Appendix 4

Dating, Courtship or Betrothal? Is There A Biblically-Prescribed Method for Mate Selection?

There is no question that the dating-mating pattern as it is commonly practiced in Western culture is seriously flawed. Any system that places a priority for mate selection on the romantic inclinations of two individuals relating in isolation from community guidance is bound to have unfortunate outcomes. Thoughtful Christians do well to scrutinize cultural practices, evaluating them in light of biblical principles and wisdom. The process of finding a mate should be as honoring to God as the outcome.

As I noted in Chapter 17, many Christians have reacted to the “negative tendencies” of contemporary dating practices by advocating the abandonment of dating altogether. Some have gone so far as to label dating as “unbiblical,” even “sinful.” But single people must have some means of meeting and getting to know a potential spouse. So alternative systems have been devised and promoted, the most prominent of which are “courting” and “betrothal.” These approaches are advanced by some advocates as being “biblical” (in contrast to dating). There is even debate between proponents of courtship and betrothal as to which of these two systems represents the divinely-sanctioned approach to finding and securing a spouse.

I’m not aware of anyone who advocates that dating is the biblically-prescribed method for mate-selection. The Bible does not discuss dating at all. People who lived in biblical eras did not engage in dating as it has been practiced in modern times. So we’re not going to evaluate the case for dating for the moment.

The Case Against Dating

On the other hand, there are some who make a biblical case *against* dating. And since that negative assessment is part of an argument in favor of courtship or betrothal, we need to consider it.

A representative critique of contemporary dating is provided by one of the contributors to *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, Jonathan Lindvall.¹ To establish what he is warning against, he defines dating as “recreational romance in which each party intentionally endeavors to cultivate the other’s desire, while recognizing the relationship is most likely temporary.” He then sets out to demonstrate that such practice runs counter to Paul’s instruction in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6a: “For this is the will of You’re your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as I also forewarned you and testified” (NKJV).

His argument unfolds from his interpretation of the passage:

1. One expression of sanctification which is part of God's will is abstaining from sexual immorality.
2. Another concerns the manner in which a man acquires a spouse. (Lindvall holds that "vessel" means "wife" in this passage, just as "weaker vessel" [same word] refers to a wife in 1 Peter 3:7.) This is not to be done "like the Gentiles who do not know God" – specifically, "not in passion of lust." Lindvall makes his point with a question: "Was Paul really saying passion and desire should not be involved in the decisions regarding marriage?"
3. Furthermore, verse 6 indicates " 'that no one should go beyond and defraud his brother in this matter' of acquiring a spouse. . . . Fraud involves deceiving or misleading someone. . . . Defrauding is inciting in someone else a desire that you are unable or unwilling to fulfill. Does this ever happen in romantic relationships? Isn't that what flirting is?"

Lindvall concludes: "Apparently Paul here was saying, 'Don't cross the line physically and don't even flirt with their emotions!' God calls us to both physical purity and emotional purity." In a follow-up article he adds, "The institutionalized flirtation of dating is a direct violation of this command."² In this manner, casual or "recreational" dating is ruled out as unbiblical.

The Case for Courtship

The most prominent alternative to dating is courtship. There are two variations on this approach to finding a mate. The more basic version is distinguished from dating by its purpose: courtship is a process in which a man and woman of marriageable age intentionally explore the possibility of marriage. They do this by spending time together in a variety of settings, sharing in diverse experiences. Practitioners of courtship do not engage in casual or recreational dating. They reserve any interactions that might lead to romance for one individual who is a likely candidate for matrimony. While some of their activities might look like dates, they make a point to guard their hearts avoiding the pitfall of falling in love too soon. They are conscious of moving through phases in the development of their relationship – from casual friendship, to deeper friendship, to purposeful intimacy with integrity, to engagement.³ The courtship process may be terminated by either party at any juncture prior to a wedding.

Advocates of this form of courtship do not (as far as I know) maintain that this approach to mate selection is biblically prescribed. They rather view it as a better way to apply the biblical principles that pertain to relationships between Christian brothers and sisters.

The second variation on courtship adds one dimension – "the active, involved authority of the young woman's father (or head of the household) in the formation of her romantic attachments leading to marriage."⁴ In this arrangement, the father functions as

the guardian of his daughter's hand and heart. Any man interested in cultivating a personal relationship with her must gain the approval of her father. And the subsequent courtship will be carried out under his watchful eye. As the protector of his daughter's best interests, the father has veto power over any agreements she may be inclined to make; so his blessing must be secured before an engagement can be declared.

The premise of this variation is that the Bible grants such authority to the father as the head of the home. Proponents point to the Fifth Commandment enjoining children to "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Leviticus 19:3), and the severe penalties threatened against those who violated it (Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 21:17; see Proverbs 20:20; 30:17). The binding nature of the commandment was reinforced by Jesus (Mark 7:9-13) and further clarified by Paul's admonition, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord" (Colossians 3:20; see Ephesians 6:1). Additionally, appeal is made to the precedent of the authority fathers were given over their daughters by the Mosaic Law. For example, if a young woman (living in her father's house) made a vow or pledge to the Lord, her father, when he learned of it, could either validate it (by saying nothing) or overrule it, canceling her obligation (Numbers 30:3-5). (A man had the same authority with respect to his wife [Numbers 30:6-8, 10-16].)

Douglas Wilson, who presents the "courtship path" in *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, acknowledges that the Mosaic Law is not binding on believers under the New Covenant; and he recognizes that there were situations in biblical history where a woman was independent of both a husband and a father. Nevertheless, he recognizes in the Bible a pervasive pattern: "In all this, I see that the Scriptures assume that fathers have a practical, applied authority in how and to whom their daughters are given. . . Basically, the central point I want to argue here is that the daughter is not left alone to fend for herself. Her father watches out for her until the time when her husband will take the responsibility to take care of her."⁵

The Case for Betrothal

Advocates of the third approach, betrothal, appreciate the emphasis on parental guidance and blessing, but feel that it doesn't go far enough. The distinctive feature added to the mix in betrothal is front-end commitment. On this scenario, if a man identifies a woman that he finds suitable/desirable as a wife, he approaches her father and expresses his interest. (Or, alternately, he may have *his* father broach the subject with *her* father.) The girl's father conducts whatever examination he deems appropriate for evaluating the suitor's fitness as a husband for his daughter. (A wise father involves his wife in this process.) If the man passes muster, the girl's parents approach their daughter, informing her of his interest and their approval. After a time of thoughtful reflection and prayer, the girl decides how to respond to the proposal. If the answer is yes, the man and woman become betrothed, that is, decisively engaged to be married. It is understood by all involved that the betrothal is binding; this couple *will* marry at the agreed upon time. It is only after this commitment is made that the couple enter into the process that, in the

other systems, would constitute courtship. The period of betrothal is seen as a time of preparation authorizing the couple to begin “releasing their hearts to one another.”⁶

The primary advantage of the betrothal approach is that it greatly reduces the potential for emotional fraud that occurs when an individual backs out of a romantically bonded relationship. In betrothal, there is no “breaking up;” there are no broken hearts. The decision to marry is made on some basis other than romantic attraction, so it has a more reliable foundation. So betrothal effectively counters the wisdom of this world – “Marry the one you love,” with biblical wisdom – “Love the one you marry” (Eph. 5:25, 28; Col. 3:19; Titus 2:4).⁷

Betrothal also has the advantage of biblical precedent. For unlike dating or courtship, betrothal was actually practiced in the cultures of the Bible. Of course, that does not prove that believers today must also practice betrothal. But proponents find in the scriptural data compelling evidence that betrothal “is a universal principle transcending cultures throughout human history and intended by God to provide a romantic and effective transition from singleness to marriage.”

To start with, the practice of betrothal is so pervasive in the biblical narrative, it appears to be an integral part of the process by which two become one flesh. It was practiced throughout the cultures of the Ancient Near East⁸; it was the dominant system in Old Testament Israel, being regulated by the Mosaic Law; it was current during the time of Christ, being the means by which Mary and Joseph were pledged to one another (Matthew 1:18-19); it was the accepted protocol in the Roman Empire of the First Century and encountered by Paul in the social structure of Corinth (1 Corinthians 7:36-38). But most significantly, this arrangement stands behind the imagery of the church as the “bride” of Christ. On the one hand, I believers *are* Christ’s bride (Ephesians 5:25-27, 32; Romans 7:1-4). And yet the consummating “marriage supper of the Lamb” is still future (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2). So Paul, speaking as a spiritual father, told the Corinthian believers: “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin” (2 Corinthians 11:2 NASB).

Betrothal is the key to understanding how believers could be the “bride” of Christ even though the wedding is yet to come. In antiquity, betrothal was a legally binding contract which gave the man legal rights over the woman. Betrothed couples were designated “husband” and “wife.” If one of them died during the period of betrothal, the other became a “widow” or “widower.” According to Mosaic Law, if a betrothed virgin slept with another man prior to her wedding, the offense was regarded as adultery and was punishable by death. (If an unbetrothed woman committed the same act [or was forced to], the offending man had to pay her father the bride-price and marry her – a lesser penalty than death [Deuteronomy 22:23-29].) In the first century, the only legal way to terminate a betrothal was by divorce – which is what Joseph was contemplating when he learned that Mary was pregnant (Matthew 1:19). This framework, in which the marriage covenant was initiated through betrothal, appears to have the sanction of God.

“This betrothal principle is the same for all cultures throughout history, just as the principle of marriage is universal and not culturally relative.”⁹

Assessment of the Arguments

I believe that the careful exploration of biblical practices and an energetic discussion of their implications for 21st century believers is a healthy exercise. Thoughtful adults will benefit from the interactions contained in *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*. But the advocates of courtship and betrothal have not convinced me that *any* specific method of mate selection is espoused (!) by the Bible. When I look more closely at the various points presented to establish that courtship or betrothal is the biblically normative approach to mate selection, I come to different conclusions.

1. *Is there any explicit instruction in the Bible prescribing methodology for selecting and obtaining a spouse?*

No. There are no commands, no instructions given on mate selection. There are plenty of descriptions of how people in biblical times brought a man and a woman together in marriage, but no explicit or universal directions. Rather than telling us what process to follow in mate selection, the prophets (OT) and apostles (NT) gave instructions on how God’s people should act as they applied the societal norms of the cultures in which they lived.¹⁰

2. *The Mosaic Law appears to sanction certain approaches to mate selection. Do those passages indicate the moral will of God for believers today?*

No. In the first place, God’s toleration of social institutions does not indicate his approval of them.¹¹ There are instructions in the Mosaic Law that regulate the practices of slavery and polygamy. But such practices are hardly descriptions of how God “wants his people to live.” Rather his prophets set moral boundaries that restricted the potential for abuse by those who exercised power, while providing protections for the welfare and dignity of those in subjection. And, in the New Testament, the apostles spelled out the ways in which righteousness and grace should affect the behaviors and characters of those who seek to please God in every arena of life.

Second, as the advocates for courtship and betrothal agree, Christian believers today are not bound to follow the Mosaic Law (Romans 6:15; 10:4; Galatians 5:18; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:18; 8:13; 10:9). Whatever instructions were given to the people of Israel regulating the practices by which spouses were obtained are not binding on those whose relationship to God is mediated by the New Covenant.¹²

3. *But doesn’t the nearly universal practice of betrothal indicate that that is the approach God intends people to follow?*

The adverb “nearly” is a clue that points in the other direction. For rather than a uniform pattern, there are a variety of practices permitted by the Mosaic legislation –

some of which may seem bizarre to modern readers. For example, a man could purchase a young woman as a servant with a view to her becoming a second wife, or concubine, or even a wife for his son (Exodus 21:7-11).¹³ Seducing an unbetrothed virgin could be an expeditious means of securing a wife – but only if her father agreed (Exodus 22:16-17). Another means for attaining a wife was by military conquest – as part of the “spoils” of war (Deuteronomy 21:10-15).¹⁴

There are even instances when a woman who wanted a husband took the initiative. Following the advice of her mother-in-law, Ruth snuck in to the threshing floor when Boaz was asleep and lay down at his feet. When the man awoke, startled, she proposed to him (Ruth 3:1-11; Ezekiel 16:8)! And he accepted! And in the New Testament, as I have previously noted, Paul stated that a widow was “free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39). Advocates for betrothal argue that these instances are exceptions to the rule. But I think that these exceptions prove that there is no rule.¹⁵

4. *Still, betrothal was clearly the dominant system. Doesn't that provide a pattern for us to follow?*

If we're talking about a *prescribed* pattern, the answer is no. If betrothal were the rule, biblical practice would establish a precedent few (if any) would be willing to follow. For betrothal was always part and parcel with an *arranged marriage*. And that means, first of all, that the decisions were made by the parents. Sometimes the wishes of the children were taken into account, but they didn't have to be – and most often weren't.¹⁶

Second, the reasons for mate selection had little to do with compatibility or the desire for close companionship on the part of groom and bride. V. H. Matthews explains:

The various factors in a marriage to be weighed in the negotiations involved social parity, economic advantage and expansion of the kinship network. Social parity was always a minimum goal. No family wanted to marry “down” socially, at least when arranging the contract for the first wife. Thus the participants had to be at least of the same social class and have approximately the same economic standing. In this way marriages served not only to produce children and a new generation to inherit property, but they also established social ties, economic connections and a network of associations that was designed to benefit both parties.¹⁷

Modern day advocates of betrothal explicitly disavow arranged marriages,¹⁸ and they maintain that the purpose of betrothal is a “preparation of the heart” on the part of the prospective bride and groom. But in biblical times, the betrothal contract was mostly an economic contract between the two *families*, sealed with a “bride-price” paid by the groom's family.¹⁹ And it was, as I have noted, legally binding. None of these features characterize modern-day practice. So while the contemporary patterns of betrothal exhibit greater consideration for the personal benefits of marriage to the bride and groom, they become in practice somewhat less than “biblical.”

5. *Isn't betrothal the first stage of marriage? Isn't it actually an integral part of marriage biblically defined?*

While it is true that those who were betrothed were legally bound as “husband” and “wife,” betrothal remained a prelude to marriage and was distinct from it. In the creation narrative, marriage is said to exist when the man leaves his father and mother, cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31). The marriage is in force when the covenant is mutually and publicly made and privately consummated. There is no reference in this basic defining statement to betrothal. Because marriage is grounded in the order of creation, it remains a divine institution, universally applicable to all cultures (Matthew 19:4-6), while betrothal is not universally normative, but utilized in some cultures.

6. *But doesn't the fact that believers are presently betrothed to Christ as his bride indicate that betrothal transcends cultures? And if our marriages are to be a reflection of the relationship between Christ and his bride, shouldn't I be practicing betrothal as part of the marriage “package?”*

When Paul wrote Ephesians 5, he was addressing men and women who are married – not people who are betrothed. It is not logically possible for married people to be a picture of a betrothal relationship. And while it may be true that in the eschatological scheme of things, we believers are presently betrothed to Jesus, that is not the point Paul was making in Ephesians 5. The self-sacrificing love that husbands give to their wives is to be a reflection of the love Christ demonstrated when “he gave himself up” for his bride on the cross. And wifely submission is to be like that given by the church to her “husband,” Christ. It is marriage, not betrothal, that is in view in this passage. The most that can be said, then, about our “betrothal” to Christ is that it provides a helpful picture, drawn from the 1st century Mediterranean culture, of our special relationship to him now and our anticipated joy with him in heaven later. But that analogy no more requires us to practice betrothal in mate selection than our “slavery” to Christ (2 Timothy 2:24) requires us to indenture human beings. It is helpful for us to understand that imagery, but we don't have to literally engage in those practices.

7. *Some proponents of courtship and betrothal assign considerable authority to parents, especially fathers, in the mate selection process. Should fathers have “veto power” over the marital choices of their children (especially daughters)?*

My response to this question has several parts. First, we need to understand that in antiquity, the authority that fathers exercised over everyone in their families – their wives, their children, their slaves – was absolute. Both in ancient Israel and in 1st century Rome, fathers had the power of life and death over their children.²⁰ In a sense, wives and children were owned by the head of the home.²¹ So when a child was “given” in marriage, that prerogative was understood literally. The authority for such unions rested with the fathers, not the bride and groom. Now it may be possible that autocratic rule was required for the effective functioning of a tribal society; but the extreme form of

hierarchy in extended families of antiquity appears to reflect more the results of the Fall than God's original design. The historical subjugation of women by men stems from the power struggle that began as a consequence of the original rebellion (Genesis 3:16). The "ownership" that fathers/husbands exercised over their wives/children stands in stark contrast to the side-by-side partnership experienced by Adam and Eve (Genesis 2) on the one hand, and the "servant leadership" and "compassionate fatherhood" commended to husbands/fathers by Paul (Ephesians 5-6) on the other. So the biblical example of paternal authority displayed in Israel is too authoritarian to serve as a positive model for contemporary fathers.

Second, in the actual, applicable instructions given to children concerning their relationship to their parents, a clear distinction is made between minors (children living in the home) and adult children. Commentators are virtually unanimous in their understanding that the imperative, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord" (Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1) is addressed to dependent children living under their parents' care. This is evident from the wider context of the "family codes" in which Paul addresses the various members of a nuclear "family" (inclusive of the servants) (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1). It is equally clear from the closer context in which fathers are instructed with respect to the children they are 'bringing up' (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). All children, both minors and adults, are under the obligation of the Fifth Commandment: "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). For this command is repeated both by Jesus (Mark 7:9-13) and Paul (Ephesians 6:2). So adult children are required to honor; but only minors are required to obey.²²

Third, the *purpose* of parental authority is not simply to give adults control over children. It is rather to provide dependent children with training and guidance so that they can grow to become independent adults. William Barclay observed:

. . . [I]n the last analysis a parent must always be trying to build up in his child that proper independence which will enable the child to stand on his own two feet and to face life on his own. The parent cannot therefore demand an obedience which takes from the child all power of decision. He must in the end respect the child as a person as well as seek to control him as a child. The great and difficult task of parenthood is to exercise control in such a way that in the end the child will not need it any more."²³

Fourth, when it comes to the marriage of daughters, there is a significant difference between the situation that existed in antiquity and our current state of affairs. During the biblical era, girls became brides during their teen years – often as soon as they reached puberty. Marriage was the *means* by which a girl became an adult woman. A girl whose marriage was arranged by her father would be obedient to him, in part, because she was a dependent child until she became some other man's wife. The only categories of "single women" in antiquity were widows and divorcées. In today's Western culture, by contrast, most daughters enter adulthood by attaining a certain age (18 or 21) and moving out on their own. Between the time that they are dependent

children living under the authority of their parents and the time that they marry, they often experience an intermediate phase of independent, single adulthood.²⁴ Such independence is regarded as desirable, for it demonstrates that the woman has acquired the maturity and life-skills to be a capable spouse.

Now, as I have repeatedly said, marriage is for grown-ups. The ultimate choice of marital partners ought to be made by adults who are mature enough to make wise decisions. In my view, the time to exercise parental *authority* is during the years of childhood and adolescence. The goal of that authority is protection and guidance toward mature independence. At the point where a woman is making marital decisions, she should have arrived at the threshold of independent adulthood. She should be ready to exercise the judgment for which her parents have been training her. So that is not the time for a father to be exercising his authority in her life. His role should become that of a trusted advisor. Wise parents should head the list of the “many counselors” their children consult when seeking to make a major decision (Proverbs 15:22).

That said, I believe that advocates of courtship and betrothal have performed a major service to Christian families and single adults by highlighting the importance of *parental involvement* in marital decision making. More often, starry-eyed lovers make the opposite mistake of making choices in total isolation from their parents and others who could provide sound judgment when it is needed the most.

8. *Does Paul’s warning against defrauding a brother in 1 Thessalonians 4 rule out dating as a legitimate approach to finding a mate?*

The interpretation of this passage that views dating as unbiblical makes it sound like the subject of Paul’s instruction is mate selection. Accordingly, the believer is warned against defrauding “his brother in this matter of acquiring a spouse.”²⁵ But Paul’s actual concern is with the believers’ sanctification, expressed negatively in abstaining from “sexual immorality” (i.e. adultery or premarital sex) (vs. 3). The tactic that Paul advocates is “that each of you should possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor” (vs. 4). What Paul means by “possess his own vessel” is very difficult to determine. As mentioned above, the anti-dating interpretation understands the phrase to mean “acquire a wife.” Others think that Paul means “control his own body.” Most translations follow the latter option, but commentators are divided – the question is very difficult to resolve. My opinion is that Paul is advocating the self-discipline of bodily control as he does elsewhere.²⁶ But my point here is that it is by no means certain that mate selection is even in view in this passage. And if it is, the acquiring of a mate is set forth as a means to addressing the primary issue at hand – avoiding sexual immorality.

Accordingly, the crime of fraud against one’s “brother” (vs. 6) would be a damaging consequence of such sexual immorality – whether it be adultery or fornication. Commentators are not settled on the precise identification of the “brother” who would thereby be defrauded.²⁷ But crossing the line of physical purity is clearly in view. Nothing is being said directly with respect to romantic relationships that might exist

between unmarried persons. To say that this passage rules out dating is going beyond authorial intent – the original meaning of Paul’s exhortation.

That is not to say that this passage has no bearing on the practice of dating. It certainly has ramifications (by way of application) for *how* Christians are to conduct their relationships with members of the opposite sex (see my comments in Chapter 12). For flirtatious behavior could well become the prelude to crossing lines that violate God’s moral will and inflict damage on another person. The cautionary words of critics of dating are worthy of the attention of every unmarried adult who seeks to honor Christ in his or her relationships.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I do not believe that the arguments that seek to establish courtship or betrothal systems as biblically normative succeed. Closer scrutiny of the points adduced in support of such views exposes flaws that undermine their validity. At a practical level, any system of mate selection that *requires* a high level of involvement on the part of parents presupposes strong, tightly-knit, spiritually-mature family constellations surrounding *both* prospective spouses. Where such a kinship network exists, wise single adults would do well to regard such a resource as a gift from God and take full advantage of it. But many readers of this book will not be doing their decision making within the context of a healthy family environment. Those individuals will need to turn to their spiritual family (the church) for needed counsel and support.

A second practical weakness I find with the betrothal system is that full commitment to marriage seems to be placed too early in the process. Since single adults in our culture bear the responsibility for making wise decisions in mate selection, in-depth knowledge of a prospective spouse is critical. That kind of knowledge can only come with extensive exposure over an extended period of time. I could imagine betrothal working if the man and woman have essentially grown up together (as was often the case in biblical cultures) and therefore already know each other well. But when prospective mates are already adults when they first meet, they need a significant amount of time and exposure before they will be able to adequately assess their suitability as spouses.

In summary, my view is that the Bible does not prescribe any system of mate selection. I agree with Lauren Winner: “Rather, I must read Scripture carefully and coherently, looking for the narratives, patterns, and principles that can guide us in making ethical decisions about situations that didn’t exist in biblical times, situations that are historically specific to the modern (or post-modern) era.”²⁸ That’s what I have attempted to do throughout this book – and especially Chapters 17-18.

¹ Jonathan Lindvall, “The Dangers of Dating: Scriptural Romance – Part 1,” 2004.

http://www.boldchristianliving.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3&Itemid=25

² Jonathan Lindvall, “Dating? Courtship? Betrothal? Scriptural Romance – Part 2,” 2004.

http://www.boldchristianliving.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7&Itemid=25

³ Joshua Harris, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1997), 205.

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- ⁴Douglas Wilson, "The Courtship Path," *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life: Defining Your Dating Style*, Alex Chediak, General Editor (Colorado Springs, CO: Think Books [NavPress], 2005), 85.
- ⁵ Douglas Wilson, *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, 63.
- ⁶Jonathan Lindvall, "The Betrothal Path," *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, 144.
- ⁷ Jonathan Lindvall, *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, 140.
- ⁸ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Cultural Aspects of Marriage in the Ancient World," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 135, No. 539, July, 1978, 241-245.
- ⁹ Jonathan Lindvall, *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, 127.
- ¹⁰ J. W. Drane, "Family," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 494.
- ¹¹ M. J. Evans, "Women," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 899.
- ¹² "Because the Mosaic law, considered as old covenant, regulates the people of God only in the years of their immaturity (Gal. 4:1-11), its social arrangements, although just, are not intended in every respect to be permanently binding. The historical perspective assumed in the law is one that looks back regretfully to the fall, around realistically at the present, and forward in anticipation of greater gifts from God." Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Man and Woman," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 652.
- ¹³ The modern reader wonders, "What sort of a father would sell his daughter to become another man's wife (or concubine)?" The answer would be: the sort of father who is looking out for the welfare of his daughter. This situation could occur when the daughter in question came from a poor family. Rather than negotiating a betrothal with an equally poor family, the father would upgrade his daughter's situation by selling her as a prospective wife to a well-to-do neighbor. This passage (Exodus 21:7-11) protects the woman from being taken advantage of by the purchasing family. John D. Hannah, "Exodus," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 141.
- ¹⁴ Again, this passage provides protection for the woman and the preservation of her dignity. Her treatment at the hands of an Israelite captor/husband would be vastly superior to the brutalization a woman could expect from any other army of the ancient Near East. And while she would be taken from her family of origin, she would be brought into the covenant community of Israel and Israel's God. Jack S. Deere, "Deuteronomy," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 300-301.
- ¹⁵ "[In the Bible] there is no biblical blueprint, no once-and-for-all model, of the family." Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15. Ben Young and Samuel Adams humorously identify no fewer than ten methods of mate selection in their chart: "Top Ten 'Biblical Ways' to Find a Mate." *The One : A Realistic Guide to Choosing Your Soul Mate* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 27.
- ¹⁶ Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, 37-38.
- ¹⁷ V. H. Matthews, "Family Relationships," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 294.
- ¹⁸ Jonathan Lindvall, *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, 140.

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- ¹⁹ V. H. Matthews, "Family Relationships," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 295. Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, 37.
- ²⁰ C. S. Keener, "Family and Household," *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, editors (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 357. Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, 38.
- ²¹ T. M. Mitchell, "Family, Household," *The New Bible Dictionary*, J. D. Douglas, organizing editor (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 416. ²¹ M. J. Evans, "Women," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 898.
- ²² In this regard, it is worth noting that in the Mosaic Law, the daughter whose vows could be overruled by her father is a woman "in her youth" who is "still living in her father's house" (Numbers 30:3, 16). The same parental authority did not extend to widows or divorced women. There were on their own (Numbers 30:9).
- ²³ William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 61. Lewis Smedes concurred: "The goal of parental authority is freedom. Parents' authority aims at releasing the child from their authority. This does not mean that parents lead their children toward freedom from authority, but that they use parental authority to help the child develop a responsible freedom that will enable him to live with . . . all other human authority." *Mere Morality: What God Expects from Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 82-28.
- ²⁴ In terms of autonomy from family authority structures, the situation of today's never-married, single adult woman may be more analogous to that of widows in the biblical era (Numbers 30:9; 1 Corinthians 7:39).
- ²⁵ Jonathan Lindvall, "The Dangers of Dating."
- ²⁶ "The [interpretation that 'vessel' means 'body'] is most likely since: 1) vessel in 1 Pet. 3:7 is used only in a comparative sense ('weaker vessel') referring to vessel in terms of general humanity not femaleness; 2) being married does not guarantee sexual purity; 3) Paul would be contradicting what he taught in 1 Cor. 7 about the superlative state of singleness (cf. 7:8, 9); and 4) if taken in the sense of 'acquiring a wife,' Paul would be talking to men only and ignoring how women were to stay pure." *New MacArthur Study Bible*, John MacArthur, general editor (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997), 1847. "Option (2) ['to control your own body'] fits well with the use of *skeuos* elsewhere in Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7, where he refers to the human body as an earthen *skeuos*; cf. Rom. 9:21-23), in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Sam. 21:5; in the LXX *skeuos* is specifically a euphemism for the genitals, a usage also attested in secular Greek with respect to both sexes), and in early Christian writings (Barnabas 21:8). In addition, it correlates closely with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6-7. Finally, it better accords with both the immediate context (the verses before and after are aimed at the entire community, which makes it unlikely that Paul would abruptly interject a command aimed at only a small subset within it, namely, men eligible for marriage) and the cultural environment (many marriages were arranged)." Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 126.
- ²⁷ "You cannot break this rule without in some way cheating your fellow-men (Phillips)." Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 126. "Sexual sin harms others besides those who engage in it. In adultery, e.g., the spouse is always wronged. Premarital sex wrongs the future partner by robbing him or her of the virginity that ought to be brought to marriage." *The NIV Large Print Study Bible*, Kenneth Barker, general editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 2363.

²⁸ Lauren Winner, “The Countercultural Path,” *5 Paths to the Love of Your Life*, 26-27.