

Sermon
Delivered on the occasion
of the
Marriage Blessing
Between

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By
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Title: A Good Wife Brings the Favour of God

Key text:

“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD” (Prov. 18:22).

Find a wife, not just a woman

I know this scripture sounds hackneyed. It could qualify as the most quoted scripture at weddings and marriage ceremonies! But don't let its ubiquity or familiarity rob you of its spiritual richness and value.

By the way, do you not notice that, although marriage rites have been performed for thousands of years, each new marriage generates an excitement of its own, not only for the newlyweds but also for their loved ones and relatives?

We could say it's a celebration of love, but more accurately the excitement is a celebration of the 'discovery' of Prov. 18:22: "Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from Yahweh".

A key verb is "find" stated twice. You don't just get a wife; *you "find" her after a search*. You don't come across her at a party, or funeral or another event and you fall for her. Nobody recommends her to you and straightaway you accept to marry her. Neither are you merely attracted by her looks or silky voice or seductive glances. You search for your future life partner with diligence. And may Heaven help you in your search!

Not every woman is necessarily a wife material. That was why Eliezer, Abraham's servant prayed for God to help him choose a wife for Isaac when his master sent him to his homeland in Mesopotamia to get a wife for his son. He prayed:

“...O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham.

“Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

“And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast showed kindness unto my master” (Gen. 24:12-14).

Eliezer’s prayer was answered when, in addition to giving him water to drink, Rebecca offered to water his camels (known to be great guzzlers of water) for him.

That is the more reason why the scripture emphasizes that “he who finds a wife finds a good thing” and not he who finds a woman and makes her his wife. This refers to a lady who already has wifely qualities in her. Before she’s married, God calls her “a wife” because she has all that it takes to be a good wife and is only waiting to be ‘discovered’ by a man in search of her!

What are these qualities?

Qualities of a Good Wife

Prov. 31:10-30 summarizes for us the godly virtues to look for in a lady worth marrying. Godly reverence is last on the list but that is not to diminish its importance or portray it as the least of the considerations to look for. Instead, it’s placed last to emphasize its overarching importance as the bedrock virtue on which all the other virtues depend.

So, for ease of recall, the first quality to look for in a wifely woman is her godly character. Is she a woman of faith who serves God and obeys Him from a sincere heart?

If the answer is yes, you are sure to enjoy all the vital secondary virtues which flow out of a woman whose heart is devoted to God and His word.

You will never call the dowry to mind! Her value is simply inestimable (v. 10)! Her husband has complete trust in her and never has any reason to suspect or doubt her. She’s an asset, not a liability to her husband (v. 11).

She works for his good, not his downfall, all the days of her married life (v. 12). She’s not some scheming woman who looks to her own interest to the disadvantage of her husband for which reason he needs to be wary of her (see Micah 7:5).

She makes sure her home never lacks the essentials of life – food and clothing. What is more, she is naturally industrious. At the marketplace, she bargains for food items and household supplies of high quality with the instincts of a professional merchant (vv. 13-14).

She is no lazybones. She rises while it’s still dark and prepares food for her family and orders her domestic affairs (v. 15).

She is not careless with money but invests some of her earnings in profitable ventures (v. 16).

She attends to the call of duty with aplomb. She psyches herself up for the day's work and throws herself into her work (v. 17). Her affairs run like clockwork. She's never negligent. What ought to be done will be done! She ensures her lamp has enough oil to stay lit the entire night (v. 18).

She's handy and sports no dainty succulent hands which are notoriously work-shy. She uses her hands in serving and providing for her household (v. 19).

She's kind-hearted and willingly gives to the poor and needy (v. 20).

She has forethought. She makes provision for hard times and is never overtaken by events – caught unprepared – exposing her family to hardship and discomfort (v. 21).

She is not slovenly or shabbily dressed. She's well-dressed decently and gracefully (v. 22).

She does not detract from her husband's persona because of her own bad reputation but enhances his social standing. She respects him as the head of the family and encourages him in his field of endeavour. "He is known at the city gates". This was a place where influential men used to sit to decide judicial cases and city affairs. It was both a seat of government and a courthouse if you will! The virtuous woman's husband is part of that circle of influence, validating her God-given role as truly his helpmate! She manages the home so well that her husband is able to concentrate on his profession or public career without worrying about conditions at home (v. 23).

She's so industrious and astute she turns a domestic skill into a money-making business. She sews clothes for herself and her household, but now she has commercialized her cloth-making skill and sells to traders (v. 24). She's ingenious!

The "virtuous woman" is a woman of strength and dignity. She exudes confidence – one you will admire from afar. She's not a weakling or a nervous wreck who easily buckles under pressure. She's spiritually and emotionally prepared for bad times which she smoothly weathers with trust in God. So then, she's not hard hit by the rough times, but she is able to "laugh" or sail through them (v. 25).

Her lips drip with words of wisdom and sound instruction unlike the wife of Job who was rebuked by her husband in his hour of trial for speaking like a "foolish woman" (Job 2:9-10). She's not sharp-tongued; neither is she a loudmouth nor a gossip. Instead, she's a fount of wisdom derived from godly fear and her own store of life experiences as a young woman, wife, mother, care-giver, business owner, home manager and team player all of which have mellowed her over the years.

She manages her home affairs with excellence and does not idle away her time in unproductive activities. That is to say, she "eateth not the bread of idleness" (v. 27).

Her children recognize her worth and call her “blessed”; her husband also praises her, thanking God for such a supportive, caring wife (v. 28). He says of her, “Many women have done wonderful things, but you surpass them all” (v. 29 CJB).

Charm is deceitful and beauty does not endure. But the woman who fears the LORD shall be praised (v. 30).

She will enjoy her investments in love, devotion, kindness, hard work, and godly reverence. Her own works will speak for her. They showcase her inner worth and beauty. The virtuous woman who’s worth marrying is recognized by her good works and righteous character.

Young brother, these are the criteria to use in selecting your wife and future life partner. This is the kind of worthy woman Heaven recommends for you for wife!

God Instituted Monogamy, not Polygamy

Notice that the LORD did not mention ‘wives’ but “whoever finds a wife”.

God did not create any man with more than one heart to love and cherish (in a romantic sense) two or four women at the same time. At the time of creation, He took a rib from Adam, the first man and husband, and made a woman from it for him.

And Adam was immediately enthralled by her beauty and charm. And he said of her: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:23).

It’s a love affair that is supposed to last ‘till death do us part’! A man is to be captivated by the love of his wife forever (Prov. 5:19). They are two souls knit together in love, and the two shall become one flesh, (mystically) made so by God.

To violate this rule of one man one woman united in the marriage bond of love is to miss out on the blessing of a tranquil and happy marriage guaranteed by God. It’s a lesson we draw from the marital lives of the Biblical personalities who married, or were romantically involved with, more than one woman.

It began with Abraham himself. Tension intruded into his happy home when he gave in to Sarah’s suggestion to sleep with her maid Hagar, the Egyptian, so he could have a child by her. To this day, the tension has not abated in the Holy Land! It has even become a metaphor for the tension between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit:

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

“But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

“Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman” (Gal. 4:28-30).

Polygamy breeds rivalry and domestic tension, and the polygamous home of Jacob was no exception. It witnessed unremitting rivalry between his two wives who were sisters (Gen. 30:1-24) because Jacob patently loved Rachel, his second wife, who was his first love and remained the love of his life (Gen. 29:18, 30).

The one exception in the patriarchal era was the marital life of Isaac. Married to Rebecca for life, there was absolutely no rivalry and tensions as would have been the case were there two or more wives in the house. (The only recorded incident of tension was of different kind – sibling rivalry between the twins, Esau and Jacob!).

Fast-forward to the time of David, and the marital tensions in his polygamous exploded into indecent domestic assaults, revenge attacks, fratricide, and even armed rebellion against he, the King, himself!

Solomon's case was the worst of all! Apart from the likelihood that there were 'mammoth' tensions and competitions in his 1000-strong harem, made up of 700 wives and 300 concubines, the women also turned his heart away from the God of Israel.

Really, how many hearts can a man have?

Therefore, search for the one wife God has prepared for you and marry her as He ordained for man from the beginning. (See Matt. 19:3-6).

He Himself cannot stand two-timing! He warns in James 4:4-5:

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

“Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealousy?”” (NKJV).

That's a spirit in every wife! It “yearns jealousy”! Therefore, you cannot please your wife if you lust for another woman in addition to her.

In the same way, “you cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). We serve a jealous God whose name is Jealous (Ex. 34:14).

And He instituted marriage as a union between a man and a woman to reflect His own desire to have our undivided allegiance (as His followers characterized as His spiritual bride).

So don't become entangled with so many women. Narrow down your search to zero in on the woman who fears God, and God Himself will bless your union – as the main invisible witness between you and the wife of your youth (Mal. 2:14). He just poured His oil of favour upon you!

A Favour Reserved for only His Married Sons

It's first the favour of love – loving and being loved. The pristine joy of Adam will be yours, as though you were seeing her for the first time:

“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

“And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:21-23).

You are smitten by her love, bitten by a love bug ordained by God! Finally, you can exult in true love, loving and cherishing her as your own body (Eph. 5:28-29).

Next, He bestows the favour of companionship – someone who complements your attributes and talents so that there is optimum performance and output. She's “an help meet” for you (Gen. 2:18, 20); one who provides what is lacking in you and who can do what you cannot do alone. You stand (as a man) to benefit from her peculiar feminine qualities and gifts. She makes you complete.

In this sense, a ‘helper’ does not designate an inferior status or a menial position (to be looked down on). The wife is a helpmate of like personhood and intellect, purposely designed by God to meet the man's need as he fulfills his responsibilities of dominion assigned to him by God Himself.

An unmarried man misses out on the power of two – the synergy of two people working together in a way which complements each other. That's surely a better option as scripture itself affirms:

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

“For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

“Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

“And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl. 4:9-12).

As we can see, there's emotional support in there as well. You won't bear your burdens alone or wrestle with your problems alone. There will be a dependable partner to share your problems and challenges with. Indeed, both of you are in it together. The burdens of life can only get lighter and conquerable with God's help.

Surely, a life partner in the shape of your wife is better than bachelorhood with all that it entails – physical and emotional loneliness; lack of nourishing home-cooked meals, and above all, lack of a stress-relieving family nest to return to and unwind after a hard day's work; a nest full of love and warmth!

This leads us to the final divine favour I would like to touch on – the blessing of procreation. Marriage allows a man to righteously reproduce his kind as the Creator intended from the beginning: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”.

Children are a gift from ADONAI:

“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.

“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.

“Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Ps. 127:3-5).

After the lady of the house, the children form the second layer of support for the man. Especially as adolescents or older, they can even scare off intruders and trouble makers. Blessed is the man who has his quiver full of them!

What is more, children assure a man of the continuity of his family line and of whatever legacy he will leave behind.

The Biblical phrase “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” reveals the importance of children in the plans and purposes of God. The children of the righteous carry forward His purposes in subsequent generations. The Psalmist declares in Ps. 102:28:

“The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee.”

Holy matrimony is another way a Christian man can help to expand the Kingdom of God. With God’s gracious help, his children will surely follow in his steps of righteousness in the holy faith.

Will God not smile on such a man as He is surely doing today, smiling at the man of the moment, our dear brother who is having his marriage blessed at this service?

Therefore, I encourage all you unmarried young brothers to get that one divine favour that has been eluding you all this while because it’s reserved for only the married sons of God. Seek His help in prayer for Him to guide you find a wife, and I assure you, you will be complete emotionally, physically and spiritually.

May the Lord bless us all. Amen!