



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Search for a Godly Spouse – Part 1

Guest(s): N/A

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Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everybody and welcome to Family Talk. I'm your host, Dr. James Dobson, and it's a pleasure to be with you. I've spoken with many married couples over the years, and some of them have enjoyed healthy and thriving marriages while others have really struggled. I taught a Sunday school class for more than 10 years consisting of maybe a hundred young married couples. I learned a lot about them, and they learned a lot about marriage I think during that time, and many of those people are still my friends. But unfortunately, some of them are divorced. None of them entered into their marriages expecting to fail.

Sadly, though, many young people who are engaged have no idea that they're heading straight into failure in their marriages. They don't even realize the danger that they're in. And that's why I believe that today's Family Talk broadcast is so important. I want you to hear a powerful and informative message from pastor and author Alistair Begg. He addressed a group of students at Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio on the topic of the search for a godly spouse. I wish every couple that's about to marry could hear what we're about to air. As you listen to this presentation, you may recognize the voice of Alistair Begg, primarily because of his accent.

After serving two churches in his native Scotland, he answered the call to become senior pastor of Parkside Church in Cleveland, Ohio. That was all the way back in 1983. He's the speaker for the daily radio ministry Truth for Life, and he has such wisdom, such wisdom, and has such good things to say. Alistair is married to his wife, Susan. And during today's program, you're going to hear a delightful story about their courtship. The Begg's have three grown children, Cameron, Michelle, and Emily. Here's Alistair Begg on the theme, The Search For A Godly Spouse, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Alistair Begg: Everything that I say I trust will be grounded in the Bible and will be biblical in its framework, but I'm not going to attempt an exposition. I want to talk to you tonight about relationships and particularly interpersonal relationships between the sexes. And since they inevitably in God's plan lead to marriage, we'll read just these few verses in the instruction given by the Spirit of God via Peter to husbands and wives in 1 Peter 3. "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your

husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. There is more than an even chance that whether you meet your intended life's partner in this institution or not, it may well be that in the next two or three years of your life, you will, in some context, meet the person that will share your life with you, providing that God has planned for you to be married.

And since the statistics on relationships and marriage are so horrendous, not least of all within the framework of the Christian Church, it's important that we are constantly making reference to this in our own thinking, planning accordingly so that we do our very, very best if God intends for us to be entrusted into the custody of another to come to that day and to that opportunity prepared and ready for the privileges and the responsibilities. It has been my unbelievable privilege to be married now for the last 27 years. We celebrated our anniversary on the 16th of August this year, as we do every year. I may say more about that later, but probably not. Let me just say certain things to you this evening.

When you think about relationships at all, in every relationship, our relationship with God must come first. And indeed, unless we have a meaningful, viable, increasing relationship with the Lord Jesus ourselves, not being kept afloat by our family structure, not relying on the temperature of the Cedarville campus, but our own personal walk with God, practicing the presence of the Lord Jesus, memorizing His word, being in it daily, sharing it regularly, then we really should go no further than that in terms of developing relationships, because it is in direct relationship to our walk with Christ that everything else falls into line. Now that is particularly so when we think about relationships with the opposite sex.

And it is important that when we find ourselves in a context such as this, where the opportunities for friendship are many and varied, that we never assume that a friendship has to be more than a friendship when it begins. We should never assume that friendship is going to be more than friendship when it begins. And by the same token, we should recognize that the absence of a friendship

with someone of the opposite sex does not determine our significance or our meaning in life. And indeed, if we do not have such a friendship, we want to beware of anyone who would try and press us into that kind of friendship. Many who have done so have found themselves in dire straits.

We need to recognize that there is no good thing that the Lord will withhold from those whose walk is blameless. If we are not involved in a dating relationship, if we do not have a special other person, there's no need for panic. God makes everything beautiful in His time. And to be unattached to someone of the opposite sex may actually be God's very best for you tonight, and it may actually be God's very best for you for always. But let us assume, since the Bible lays it out as the normal pattern of life, that each of you who as yet is not married is planning on being married. And therefore, you're going to be faced with crucial decisions as you go forward.

You're going to have to decide where you're going to take advice and whether you're going to listen to those who love you most and care for you the best of all. Few relationships, if any in life, are neutral. You remember that from high school. There were people in whose company it was easy to be good. There were people in whose company was easy to be bad. That is true not only of fraternal relationships, but it is definitely true with those of the opposite sex. And when we make friends with the opposite sex, it is important that we take into account the way in which others view those friendships.

And so, it is imperative that in all of these things, we come to the issue slowly, with realistic expectations, and without anticipating marriage in any of its aspects in the development of friendship. So often I listen to young people tell me, "Well, I know that once we're married, we'll be able to take care of that," whatever that is. "I know that he's got a little problem there, or I know she's a little difficult there, but we will be able to sort that out." Listen, most people on their dating relationships are on their best behavior, and so you have to be very, very careful. You need to see this potential spouse in a variety of different situations.

For example, you need to see what he's like when he's late for an appointment because of congested traffic and you're driving in the car with him. You need to see what he or she is like visiting a hospitalized loved one. You need to see what he is like in the way that he treats his mother and speaks to her and whether he looks into our eyes when she asks him a question. You need to see the way in which she brushes her hair from her forehead when her father asked her a question across the dining room table. You need to see what she's like playing with children in the streets, being around their parents, with their regular friends, participating in competitive sports, handling various stressful situations.

And the tragedy that I face as a pastor is in finding couples coming to me to be married and they've never seen each other in any of these situations. They've got a kind of hurry up offense stirred by their emotions, fueled by their glands. They're ready to be married. Very often they haven't decided whether they're

actually marrying a person or whether they're marrying a body. Western society is obsessed with externals, facial features, figure, muscular composition, weight, hairstyle, and so much more. And this puts tremendous pressure on our culture. Young women quickly assuming that their significance is directly related to their shape and to their dress size.

Young men frequently modeling themselves after professional athletes, disappointed that their features are less than perfect. And products offered from toothpaste to self-tanning products with a cover message that image matters more than character. Image doesn't matter more than character. Therefore, it is vitally important that when you think these issues through that you're asking yourself the question, is the attraction that I feel for this fellow, is the attraction that I feel for this girl motivated primarily by physical instincts? Now, I want to suggest for a moment that that is some marginal consideration, but beauty is, for all of us, in the eye of the beholder.

Now, there may be shared perceptions, but we often have very clear understandings of what we regard as lovely. And so, the more significant questions don't have to do with shape and size and structure, but we need to be asking questions like, do I enjoy having a conversation with her? Can this fellow carry on an intelligent conversation? How do I feel when I introduce this chap to one of my father's business associates? Is this character a social misfit? Does he or she have a growing interest in spiritual things, or do I get the impression that they're simply saying that because they know that it is important to me? My young friends tonight, listen, these questions get to issues that are enduring. Age takes its toll on all of us.

Physical beauty is passing. To invest in a person as simply a physical package is to set ourselves up for a dreadful fall, because the package will begin to sag and will begin to droop over time. The law of gravity is the law of gravity. There is only so much you can do to keep it all up where it needs to be. And some of us never, ever had it up where it needs to be in the first place, and so we are of all men most miserable. When I came to America for the first time in 1972, I came in search of a girl. I knew who the girl was. I wasn't trying to pick her out of the crowd, but I tracked her down to Michigan, to the shores of Western Michigan. Found here there amongst a bunch of young American fellows who had muscles in places that I didn't have places.

Then they took me on dirt bikes. That was a bad decision on my part. Some fellow's father had an agency or a dealership or something and I arrived at a place that I don't know where it was to find all these bikes. The fellows got on the front, the girls got on the back, and off we were going through the Michigan dunes. So I did what they did. I got on the front, the girl got on the back. They all took off. I went about a hundred yards and ditched it in the sand, with the girl as well. I got back up. I can't bore you with the story. I had dreadful hay fever, the worst kind of hay fever. It produced horrendous nosebleeds. I ditched the bike in the sand. My nose began to bleed. The hay fever began to go. The blood began to congeal with the sand on my face.

I looked like a Mohican Indian somewhere. And they had given me a helmet of all things and my hair was sticking out in bunches at the side. Boy, did I look good. And the final ignominy was that I had to ask the girl to drive the bike while I sat on the back. And she rode a bike back around in the sand and they were all there waiting for me, the All American Marines. And here he comes, peering over the shoulder of his girl, the Mohican with the hair sticking out the back. What possible hope did I have? I was a no hoper. No chance. Now I have to go home across the Atlantic Ocean and leave this girl and the dirt bike and everything else behind.

Sometimes when we ride in the car together now, all these years later, I look across at her and I say, "My, my, my, it certainly couldn't have been physical." I actually met her when she was 13. I decided pretty quickly that if ever this girl would grow up around her eyes and I got the chance, I would marry her. I've never, ever wanted to marry anyone else. From the age of 16, I wrote letters to her for seven years, four of those years across the Atlantic Ocean. So for those of you who are doing English, never doubt the power of the pen. All those American water-skiers bowed to the Scotsman's pen.

So girls, your beauty shouldn't be that which comes from time spent in front of a mirror, but rather time spent in front of the mirror of the word of God. And men, the biggest thing that you can bring to the possibilities of marriage is the character of integrity and a life of spiritual maturity. What I would like to do in the remaining time that I have, and I'm not sure how much I have, is help you by suggesting what you should look for if you're planning getting a husband. And then if I have time, I'll tell you what you should look for in a wife. This is my opinion, and it's really quite a good opinion as I think you'll agree. There's nothing funny about this, nothing surprising. Number one, what should I look for in a husband?

The man should be committed to growing in his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, committed to growing in his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not take on a fellow as a discipleship project. Don't take on a husband who has merely mastered Bible trivia. Look for a husband who is serious about growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Imagine that he's going to be in part your shepherd and your guide, that he's going to be the spiritual leader of your home, that he is going to be the nurturer of your children together. And think about that long and hard before you sell out for anything else. Secondly, a husband should be an individual of obvious integrity. If he cheats on the golf course, beware.

Anyone that cheats on the golf course has the potential for cheating anywhere. If you find him in an employee-employer situation fudging the issue in his sales calls, telling somebody that he can get the product to them in two weeks when he comes afterwards and tells you that actually he knew that he couldn't get it there for four weeks, but he said that because he didn't want to lose the sale, on the day he tells you that, you need to have a long, serious conversation with him. And if he seeks to undergird his deceptiveness with argumentation, you

should probably kiss him goodbye. No matter how some men try to justify their use of untruth, those lies should serve as neon signs to prospective brides.

What makes you ever think that if a person would lie to a customer, to a boss, to a teacher, to a parent, he wouldn't also lie to his wife? You need a husband who is honest to the core, to a fault. Thirdly, you need to look for a husband who is able to lead boldly, to lead boldly. Not everyone's going to marry the high school quarterback or the class president. That's not the kind of leadership to which I'm referring, but every girl needs to look for the kind of man who can think for himself, who can weigh options, and who can make good decisions. No person always makes good decisions. Everybody makes mistakes.

Many times good leadership demands the willingness to acknowledge that I've made a mistake and to turn around and make a second decision. In thinking of a man who is able to lead boldly, we ought to say very quickly that a girl should never settle for leadership that is selfish, bombastic, and domineering. The leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, the leadership as a spouse by the apostles is a leadership that is marked by an attitude of servanthood, an attitude that submits to the leadership of others. And that is of vital importance. The flip side of it, of course, is simply that a young woman should be more than a little concerned if the fellow that she's dating has to check with his mother all the time.

"Well, I need to phone my mom about that," and all he's trying to decide is whether he should buy the large or the medium t-shirt in Gap. You know you've got a problem there. In fact, while he's choosing, just slip off ever so quietly into the mall and don't ever come back. If he doesn't have the wherewithal to decide between the medium and the large in the navy blue t-shirt, you've got a problem. Trust me. Let somebody else fix it.

Dr. Dobson:

Well, we've been listening to the valuable insights from pastor and author Alistair Begg on today's edition of Family Talk. He is a great speaker, a good pastor, and one with a lot of common sense advice for couples. Now, our theme has been The Search For A Godly Spouse. On tomorrow's program, we're going to hear the conclusion of his list of six things to look for in a husband, and we'll also talk about six things to look for in a wife. The principles Alistair Begg mentioned in his talk today were also referenced in his book, *Lasting Love: How to Avoid Marital Failure*. Both parts one as well as part two of Alistair Begg's presentation are available on one full length audio CD. Call toll free for yours, 877-732-6825.

That's 877-732-6825. And if you're part of the growing number of people who have supported us financially this summer, I want to thank you for those contributions. Family Talk is completely listener supported and simply could not make it without our faithful friends. And we deeply appreciate your prayers and contributions. And we love each one of you for doing what you do to keep us afloat. Be sure to join us again next time as we hear the conclusion of Pastor Alistair Begg's informative talk to students at Cedarville University. It's about 30

minutes from Dayton. I'm Dr. James Dobson. Thanks for listening today to Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Clinton: Hi, everyone. This is Dr. Tim Clinton here for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. You know, the news comes in all kinds of shapes, sizes, and formats these days, but how do you cut through the noise and get to the heart of the matters that affect your family? Come to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and sign up for Dr. Dobson's monthly newsletter. You'll find clarity on tough issues, encouragement for your everyday life, and trusted principles to help you build strong, healthy, connected families. Go to drjamesdobson.org. Sign up today. That's drjamesdobson.org.