

## FINDING A MATE

JULY 17, 2022 | BUILDING TOGETHER | NEHEMIAH 10:30 | PASTOR SCOTT TURANSKY

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we submit our hearts to you. It's hard to submit. But we know that submitting to you is the right thing to do. We know that many of your blessings come to us when we do submit to you. The blessings are waiting for us, we just don't receive them because we often have a pride problem that gets in the way. So I ask, Lord, that you would humble our hearts. Help us to submit to you today as we look at your word. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

I suppose one of the most rewarding (should I say?) things that we hear is that a person's getting their life together. You know, you hear about someone that's been having some trouble in their life and now they're getting it together, and you go, "Yes, finally," is sometimes what we say to a person getting it together. But it's even more exciting when a young person says, "I'm going to get my life together." There's something special about that, that says, yes, I'm going to live life differently than those around me in the culture. I'm going to dedicate myself to the Lord early instead of going through a lot of the challenges that other people go through and then after getting together later in life. Look, if you're later in life, now's the time to get it together. But I'm just encouraged when young people make that commitment and they choose to get it together, especially in this area of spiritual growth and spiritual life.

Well, that's what's happening with the believers in our Nehemiah passage. We saw last week that they were getting it together. They decide they're going to dedicate themselves to the Lord. This is so important. We looked at three words. One of the words was 'separate.' Because in order for us to get it together, we must understand the difference between separation, where identity comes from, and participation in our world. The second word we looked at was the word 'understanding.' The idea of seeing the consequences of present actions. We all need more of that. Gaining that wisdom is strategic as we're trying to grow up in our lives and get it together. The third word we looked at was the word 'walk.' Because when we learn how to walk with God or walk in God's law, then good things happen in our lives. So these people in Nehemiah's time were dedicating themselves to the Lord, because that is the number one decision that we make in our lives. It is the most important decision any of us will ever make and that is to get it together with God. To dedicate ourselves to God and to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

So if you're here today and you've never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, I just want to tell you, that's your most important decision you'll ever make in your life. I invite you to do that today. We'd love to help you get to know Jesus Christ in a very personal, intimate way.

Now once you make that decision, and that's your number one decision, there's a second decision, your number two decision that we're going to talk about today. Because that's what's happening with the people. They're dedicating themselves to the Lord and they come to the second most important decision anybody makes in their life, and that is finding a mate. And so they're going to dedicate themselves now in this area of their lives to live life differently, not like the culture. So we're going to spend some time today talking about finding a mate.

In order to do that, I want to read the verse. Just one verse. I felt like we need to slow down here in the passage. I want you to see this one verse. Because they're in the second most important decision, and they're going to look at this in their own lives and they're going to make a statement about what they're going to do. We're going to take principles from this idea that's presented in this passage and apply them to our own lives. So I want to take this one verse from the Old Testament and the verse from the New Testament, put them together today, and we're going to talk about the value of marriage in people's lives. So would you stand with me, please, as I read this one verse from Nehemiah 10:30.

It says this: *We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.* In other words, we're going to do this find a mate stuff differently. We're going to value marriage. Marriage is going to be more important than it has been in the past. We're going to follow God's direction in regards to this.

The verse I'd like to also complement this with is in Hebrews 13:4 where it says – *Let marriage be held in honor among all.* That means valued, raised up, that marriage is important and valuable. *And let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.* Two things we're lifting up and valuing – one is marriage and the other is sex. In our community, in our culture, and in our society, these two things are devalued. We're going to talk about the value of those two things.

Why don't you go ahead and sit down as we talk about this.

You know, as I think about the value that God wants marriage to be so important and valuable. But I think often in our society, we don't value marriage. It becomes this, well, I'll do it if it works into my schedule or I'll do it if it fits. But there's a lot of people who don't even get married. They just live together. They don't make this very important decision. And marriage, God is saying let's make it really valuable.

When I start asking the question, why is it that people don't value marriage so much? I think one of the reasons people don't value marriage is because of their own personal experience. They grew up in families where mom and dad were yelling at each other or bad things were happening, and they go, "I'm not getting married. I don't want to do that." I think that's really sad because God has something very special planned in this marriage experience. It is difficult. I'll have to admit, it is difficult to be married. Some of you know that already, yes. And you know, I used to think I was a really righteous person. Then I got married. And then I learned how much selfishness I have in my life. That was nothing compared to having kids, boy. Then I really saw the selfishness I had. I never knew I was that kind of a person. You see, I am convinced that marriage is this sanctifying place. It's this place where we grow and we develop. God has this

very special thing planned in marriage. Marriages are challenging sometimes and they're difficult, but we work out our sanctification in the midst of that laboratory of the family. And God has important things for us.

So some people don't value marriage, I think because of their own experience.

I think some people don't value marriage because of their own passions. They just want the benefits of marriage. Oh boy, and they're excited about that. And so forget marriage, I'm going to skip that step and go straight to the next step. And passions are dangerous. Because if we pursue passions, then we end up in places that aren't good. Or if we're letting our desires run us, then we find ourselves in bad places. We can't let passions determine our values.

I think another reason people don't value marriage today has to do with our culture, has to do with our schools. There are some who believe that it's very important to teach about sex education in the schools. I would say the most important place to teach about sex education is in the home. I would also suggest that having the family supported by a church that's also talking about these issues, even in a worship service is very important. That's what we do. We want to equip families, we want to equip young people. It's very difficult when you try to talk about sex in an educational environment because... Oh, you can teach the biology. You can teach people how to avoid pregnancy, how to avoid STDs. But what about the values that come along with that? If you teach about this very intimate subject without the values, then you end up in a place where sex becomes common place. It's not special. It's just a biological thing that takes place, that is misused, violated, and it's not held in honor, it's not held in this value. I want to tell you today, young people in particular, that you want to value marriage and value sex as something very special. Because when you take part in those two things, according to God's design, good things can take place.

Young people, I know that you are finding yourself in difficult situations in classrooms today, in the school culture, in the society. Because the culture is telling you certain things about marriage. God has designed marriage. He has the prescription for marriage and what makes marriage successful. But the world tries to redefine marriage. Sometimes they will say that marriage is fine just between two committed people, even if both of them are men, that they can get married, or both of them are women and they can get married. I want you to know that is not what God teaches in His word. There are some who even tried to manipulate God's word to try to make it say something than it doesn't. But God's word is very clear about this subject.

In fact, let me just show you one of the many passages that talk about homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27. It says – *For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchange natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.* The Bible is very clear that there's no room in God's kingdom plan, in His description of how life goes in the code. There's no room for L, or G, or B, or T, or Q, or whatever letter you want to put in there. Okay? God has a code that He's established.

Now let me quickly say it's very important for us to be compassionate with every person that we come in contact with. You see, the most important decision a person makes in their life has to do with commitment to the Lord. That's what we want to draw attention to. This number one commitment that God is my God, the one who is going to run my life, then we come to this next issue.

But you will hear arguments from people about sexuality that maybe even cause you to question whether the Bible is true. You might hear an argument like this. That people will say, well, this person was born with these tendencies. From early on, from as soon as they were able to talk or speak, they had these tendencies. And so people will say that I had these tendencies since I was very young, therefore it can't be bad. That's their conclusion. If I had tendencies from when I was very young, then they can't be bad. It's part of who I am.

Now let me just give you an answer to that from a biblical perspective. Because we would agree that there's some people who are born that way. Just like some people are born with a tendency to be angry. You know, some moms report that the child came out angry. Others have a tendency to lie. As soon as they can start talking they're lying. We know that some people have addictive personalities and that even seems to be passed on in a family, addictive personalities. There are tendencies that people have from birth. I understand that. That makes sense. It is true. God calls that a sin nature. That we all have a tendency to do things that are selfish, self-focused. Our tendency to disobey God. We all have that tendency.

I just want you to understand that there is a biblical response to every argument that you can come to when it comes to alternative lifestyles or however you want to describe this very important subject. God wants us to hold marriage in high regard, and God designed marriage to be between one man and one woman for life. That's God's design in His word. We want to value that. We want to uphold it greatly. We want to honor it, as the passage says. That means we express value toward that sanctity of marriage.

I think there's one other reason why some people don't value marriage. It has to do with entertainment. You know, you watch a movie today and people didn't even know each other before the scene starts. And now they get to know each other and then they start moving toward each other, and pretty soon they're in bed somewhere in the movie. I mean, it just happens so fast. We get programmed to think that there's this way of finding a mate that is totally foreign to God's design. God has a design for this and He wants us to understand that.

So these Nehemiah believers are coming to the conclusion, alright, we're right with God, we know that's right. Now we've got to come to this next decision about how we connect our children as mates. Now, in this passage we see a very cultural dimension of their lives. It's arranged marriages. And of course, many of you young people, like I said, "Well, don't worry, man. I'm not letting my parents do that for me." But you might imagine if you're a parent, you want to find the very best mate. And you have experience in life. And so well, I'm not sure that the current statistics do this very well, to show that people are choosing their own mate, but we're not going to go there. Okay. You're going to make your decision yourself, you're going to find a mate. Let's try to learn from that. Let's not just talk about what we're not going to do today. Let's talk about what this looks like when you find a mate.

I want to go to another passage of scripture, Genesis 24. Because in Genesis 24 we have this romantic passage about finding a mate. I think you'll find it interesting. There are several principles in this passage that will help us understand how best to approach this very, very important subject in our lives. Again, it's in the culture. So we're going to take some principles from the culture. Abraham wants to find a mate for his son, Isaac. So he chooses the servant and the servant is going out on this mission. Let's read the story in Genesis 24.

It says this: *Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor.* He left where he was because the culture around him was not where he was going to best find a mate. He wanted someone that aligned spiritually. And so he sends this servant away.

I was just thinking this week, you know if Abraham was alive today, I wonder if he would be engaged or involved in online dating. There's a lot of problems with online dating, I know. Some people just get on there to hook up. But if you go on to the site, you create your profile, it says "I am a Christian." If you start there, then you're more likely to find someone who is a Christian. You know I'm not a proponent necessarily of that, I'm just saying I wonder what he would've done. Because he's saying just look around here. We're not finding what we want in this culture.

He goes on and he says – *he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water.* I think it's interesting. He went where the women were. *And he said...* And this is the cool thing. He prays. I would just encourage you to spend some time praying that God would provide the right person for you. I'm talking about people who are young people trying to find a mate. That prayer is that important part. In fact I would suggest you as parents want to pray for your kids when they're young. And you want to say to them, "I know you're only seven years old, but your husband or your wife is probably growing up in a home somewhere. We don't even know who they are yet. Let's pray for that person even though we don't know who they are. Because God is in the business of bringing people together and let's pray that that person is learning how to obey and learning how to respect their mom and dad, just like you're learning. In fact you want to practice that so you can be a mate for someone else." We're praying because we want God to be very much in control of this and we're dedicating this process to the Lord.

So the servant says – *"O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. I'm dedicating this process of finding a mate to you, Lord."* He says in his prayer – *"Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say back to me, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."*

Do you see what he did here, young people? What he did was he created a list of what he was looking for in a spouse. He's going, I want someone who's kind, I want someone who's going to take initiative, I want someone who's responsible, someone who's hospitable. I want someone who can work hard. I'm sure it takes a lot of work to water camels. So I want that kind of a

person, Lord. So he draws up this list of things he's looking for. I think it's a good thing to do. Say, "This is the kind of person, Lord, that I want to be married to."

See, this is so important. Because the way the world looks at finding a mate is very different than what I think is wise and what is godly. I tried to create a diagram for you so that you might see the different ways that one might have a foundation for a relationship. Because in our world today most people think (at least that we see in the entertainment) that attraction is the key to finding a mate. I'm attracted to that person, therefore this one must be the one. I'm going you got to be kidding me. I say to young people regularly, do you know that after you get married, you're going to be attracted to people still? The attractions don't go away. You'll still be attracted to people. You can't use that as a basis for making decisions. In fact, attraction can be deadly.

And so people quickly move to compatibility. Well, compatibility is so important. We're going to have the same things that we enjoy are things in common. I'm going what? You kidding me? Great, that's fine. But do you know why people get divorced today? It's because they started with compatibility, but in five years, especially in your twenties, you change so much that now you don't enjoy the same things. Now, you don't have the same things in common. So what? We're just going to get divorced? Compatibility is not the best strategy for determining a mate.

Now I think values and purpose are helpful. Because if you have values and purpose in your life, then that's going to help you have a longer lasting relationship. Even if you value things that aren't even God's value. Let's say you value money and your purpose is to build a business together. Or let's say you value family and your purpose is to build a family together. Those things can really help you have a longer relationship and contribute to even a deeper relationship. But the problem is, things change over time. What do you do when your family is gone? What do you do when the business fails, then you haven't invested in something that is most significant.

I would suggest that God says that the most significant foundation for a marriage relationship is spiritual oneness. That means you're going to find someone who will pray with you out loud. We're going to pray together. You're going to find someone who's going to share what they're learning from their Bible reading. That you're going to serve the Lord. You're going to worship together. These are the things that provide this glue that provides a deep relationship because God doesn't change. And so if we're building this relationship based on the Lord, then there's this triangle of relationship that can last forever. That's what we're looking for in this spiritual dimension.

So this servant is out on this path. He's trying to find a mate for Isaac. And well let's read on in the story. It says – *Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder. This is like the heroine comes into the story. The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known.* What that means is she was sexually pure.

Again, this is one of those areas where the world says that sexual purity or virginity is one of those things you want to lose as soon as you can. That you don't have experience unless you've participated in the marriage bed before you're married. What a mistake. Because what that does is it makes sex common. And when sex is common, just a biological function, then it doesn't

have the power that it has in a marriage relationship. God designed this in such a special way to enhance a marriage relationship. It is a spiritual experience. Is that a foreign concept? That sex is a spiritual experience? In fact if we were to go back to this list of things, where does sex fit into here? See, the world would say it fits into attraction. Ooh I'm attracted to that person, I'm jumping into bed. But God would suggest that spiritual oneness is where the sexual relationship is communicated. That's a very interesting idea. But that's what 1 Corinthians 6 says. It says *your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*. It says right in that passage be sexually moral. Wow, he's tying those two things together.

So I say to couples as they're getting married, you're going to have an opportunity in this marriage relationship to have sex. And when you have sex within the marriage relationship, then that is God's design. In fact you can imagine yourself in that marriage bed is that Jesus is in that room with you saying that's it, good for you, go for it. Sometimes young people will say, "Oh yuck!" Why do they say that? It's a misunderstanding of this very important dynamic of God's design. God designed sex to be part of this spiritual experience a couple has together.

It continues in the passage. It says – *She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water to drink from your jar." She said, "Drink, my lord." And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels. The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not. Do you see what he's doing? He's watching her. Is this the one?*

If you're thinking about getting married to someone, you want to watch them. How do they handle conflict? How do they handle anger? How does he treat his mother? Because that's how he's going to treat you. So see how he treats his mother, how he treats his father. Watch what's going on in the dynamic of this. So he's watching to see what's going to happen. You want to watch what's actually going on.

*When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels, and said, "Please tell me whose daughter you are." I hate to stop the story there, I know you're going to want to read more. It's Genesis 24. It's a great romantic story. Go and read it yourself.*

But just for the sake of our study this morning, we're looking at one piece of the life cycle. That life cycle where you're finding a mate. I know many of you aren't in that little part of the life cycle right now. You're in that space where you're right in the nitty gritty of marriage, which is very difficult, a very sanctifying experience. You can expect it to be hard. You have to live with an imperfect person. And that would be okay if you weren't imperfect yourself. So we have this imperfection that goes back and forth. And all kinds of disappointment, anger, things happen. It's just a sanctifying place. It's a spiritual oneness that draws us together so we can enjoy and experience what God has for us in the midst of marriage. It's the spiritual oneness that allows us to move forward.

Some of you may be divorced today. Others of you may have lost your spouse. Those are different parts of the life cycle. We'll cover those (not next week), but over a period of time. As we come to those in passages of scripture, we'll talk about them. But today we're focusing in on this one very important decision about finding a mate. I believe we as a church want to help our young people make decisions that are wise and to know what that looks like. Because they're not going to hear it in the world. They're not going to hear it on TV. They're not going to hear it at school. They're going to hear it from us at church, and they're going to hear it from us and our families. We want our young people to know there's a way to do this thing called marriage well. We're seeing in this passage the value of finding a mate, and serving the Lord. It is the second most important decision that you can make in your life, a strategic decision, and you want to do it well.

God has a code. He's laid it out. These people in Nehemiah's time are coming to that realization that, wow, we want to serve the Lord. Where do we look next? Let's look at how we find a mate. Let's consider that even as a church as we go forward. Amen? Amen.

Would you stand with me and we're going to sing a song. But let me pray for us first.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father. I know that as I speak about this issue, there are people at different places in their lives – some who feel like they've really messed up, some who've violated your decree regarding sex, have trivialized it. Lord, I pray that you would provide a purity of heart today. That you would allow people this fresh start, this ability to start over, to move forward following your code and recognizing the power that that contains. Lord, we know it's very practical. We know that we can trust you in every area of our lives. So we ask that you'd be honored in our lives today as we serve you. In Jesus' name, amen.