

A Little Dating Advice for Singles

"Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish on him." (2 Samuel 14:25)

How much stock do you put into appearance? To some, it's the first (and only) thing they see, especially when looking for a mate. For them, Absalom would stand out as a good catch. His was wealthy, powerful, good looking, and apparently a smooth talker (see 15:1-6).

But you wouldn't want to date a man like Absalom. He was a rebellious, vengeful, murderous, lying, manipulating, prideful, power hungry young man whose lack of character ultimately led to his own premature death.

So to all the singles out there looking for a husband or wife, we encourage you to be discriminating and careful about who you date. Don't be deceived by externals. A good marriage is built on common faith in God and solid character. A marriage built on appearance alone is doomed to fail.

Father, please give wisdom and discernment to our singles who are looking for a mate!

- by David Maxson

Gratitude Makes Happiness

Most of our unhappiness is produced by the gross sin of ingratitude -- self pity is what it is often called. Anything we do not like, anything that is against our wishes, makes us miserable if we are consumed by selfishness. It is quite striking that many of those who were so miserable as to commit suicide were blessed with looks, talent, wealth and even fame. They "quit" on themselves and on life, not because no one needed them, but because they magnified their miseries and ignored their blessings.

The antidote to this kind of misery is to reverse the process. Forget yourself. Jesus said "deny" yourself (Matthew 16:24). Help someone who needs some help. Magnify your blessings and remember that all your problems -- all of them -- are temporary. We were made for eternity! What a blessing. Thank God for the great hope we have in Jesus, and for the blessings of the common day!

- by Jere E. Frost

Reasons to Discipline Our Children

A scanning of Solomon's Proverbs provides several reasons. . .

1. To show you don't hate them. "He who spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is careful to discipline him." (13:24)
2. To give them hope: "Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." (19:18)
3. To help them for a lifetime: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (22:6)
4. To chase away foolishness: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him." (22:15)
5. To save his soul: "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death." (23:13-14)

6. For your own comfort: "Discipline your son and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul." (29:17)

Parents need to read and understand these passages. So, too, should our children. We want them to see why for their own good, and for the good of their children as well.

- *by Bob Hines*

Proving Oneself

In writing about the qualifications of deacons, Paul said that they ought to "first be proved" (1 Tim. 3:10). His point is obvious. Before a man should be appointed to serve in this special office in the church, he should have demonstrated his faithfulness, his zeal and his commitment to serve the Lord. The church does not need someone who has to be specially recognized before he does any work. It needs a man who is already working - and who will continue to work whether he receives any recognition or not.

While Paul was specifically speaking about deacons in the text cited, there are some things implied that have application to all Christians.

- First, you should realize that you are currently establishing a reputation. Others in the congregation are viewing your work and service. They are developing an opinion of you. As they think of you, they will see you as either a steady worker or as a mere spectator in the work of the church. Which will it be?

- If it is right to hold potential deacons up to this kind of scrutiny, why would it not also be proper to use the same approach regarding folks who might be selected for other roles in the church? Preachers, Bible class teachers, those who serve in the public worship, etc., all need to "first be proved."

- And, while some will complain about this kind of "judging," it is clear that the Lord expects us to do it (John 7:24). If you want to serve, then you must be willing to "first be proved."

And so, Christian, how are you doing? As your brothers and sisters look to you do they see someone who is "proving" himself as a faithful disciple? Such evaluations ARE taking place continually. How do you rate? Think!

- *by Greg Gwin*