

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a believer in Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

In this sixth series, the Bible teaches how Christians prepare themselves for marriage. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: FOR A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE THERE MUST BE PROPER TIMING AND A PROPER PROCEDURE.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Ecclesiastes 8:5b-6a. We will meditate the truths in the Bible together.

The memorisation verse is: Proper timing: Ecclesiastes 8:5-6. "The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter ..."

(T) First. God has determined a time for everything.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 teaches, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven". God has decreed that everything has its proper time. He has decreed the proper time when you were born and the proper time when you will die. He has determined that there is a proper time for everything you should do. He has determined a proper time for your work to be fruitful and a proper time when there will be no fruit.

In verse 5, he has ordered that there is a time to embrace and there is a time to refrain from embracing. People embrace their family members and good friends. In a more narrow sense, people embrace their "girlfriend" or wife, or their "boyfriend" or husband. God has determined that there is a time to learn at school, a time to work, a time to earn money, a time during which you should not embrace another person. God has determined that there is a *time during which you should not "date"* a person of the opposite sex. But God has also determined that there is a time to make friends with the opposite sex, a *time to "date"* a person from the opposite sex, a time to prepare for marriage and a time to be married. Christians should therefore not follow the pattern of this modern world, in which young people think that everyone still going to school should have a boyfriend or a girlfriend. God has determined that there is a proper *time for you to be single* and there is a proper *time for you to develop a relationship with someone of the opposite sex*.

In verse 7, God has ruled that there is a time to be silent, and that there is a time to speak. In a more restricted manner, God has determined that there is an appropriate *time not to speak* to people of the opposite sex about serious matters as "intimacy", "marriage", "sex", "having children", etc. and that there is another appropriate *time when you may speak* about these matters to one another.

In conclusion, verse 14 teaches that everything that God has decreed to happen, will happen. A person cannot add anything to God's decision or take anything away from it. A person cannot change God's sovereign plan and control of things on earth. God is Almighty and Sovereign, so that all people would fear him. He determines everything, so that all people would realise how much they are dependent on him! Therefore, Christians should realise that God has determined the proper time for them to grow, the proper time for them to study or work and prepare for life, and the proper time for them to "date" and to marry.

(S) Second. A wise person knows the right time and procedure for dating and marriage.

Ecclesiastes 8:5-6 teaches that God not only determines "the proper time", but also "the proper procedure" for every matter. The word "procedure" (Hebrew: mishpat) in the original language includes three things: it means "the truth" about everything, "the manner" how to do everything, and "the judgement" of God of everything.

God has determined that everything has its own fundamental truth. The truth of anything fits harmoniously into all the other truths God has created. For example, God has determined the truth that "marriage is always between two people of the opposite sex". God does not regard the relationship between two homosexuals or lesbians as "marriage"!

God has determined that everything has its own correct manner how it should function (operate). Everything has "its own correct procedure". For example, God has determined that "a man should win his wife in a way that is holy and honourable" (1 Thes 4:4-5)! The modern way of winning a girl or boy "in passionate lust" by caressing the other person's body and by pre-marital sex, is not God's proper procedure!

God has determined that everything man does will be judged by God. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 gives the conclusion of the matter discussed in the book of Ecclesiastes: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is *the whole duty of man*. For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil”. Everything men and women do in dating and marriage that is not according to the fear of God and that is not according to God’s Word will be brought into God’s Last Judgement!

The wise person will know God’s proper time and procedure for dating and marriage. The word “he knows” in the original language is stronger and means “he discerns” and therefore “he is convinced”. The wise person is convinced that everything has a proper time. The wise person is convinced that everything has a proper procedure. The wise person is convinced that everything he does will be brought into God’s final judgement. The wise person is convinced of God’s coming judgement, because everywhere around him he can see how great the miseries of people’s sins are! The wise person is convinced that he is *responsible* for everything he does and *accountable* to God for everything he does. The implication of this teaching is that the fool is not convinced that everything has a proper time and procedure. The fool does not believe that he is responsible for how he lives and accountable to God for everything he does. Thus, with respect to the relationships between men and women God has determined that there is a proper time and a proper procedure for doing everything. There is a proper time and procedure for remaining single (unmarried). There is a proper time and procedure for “dating” someone of the opposite sex. There is a proper time and procedure for “marrying”. There is a proper time and procedure for raising children, etc. Not man, but God determines the proper time and the proper procedure. Man may not do what is right in his own eyes (Prov 3:7). Man must do only what is right in God’s eyes. Therefore, the wise person lives in complete dependence on God. He obeys God’s commands, he looks for wisdom in God’s Word and he prays to God for wisdom *what* to do, *when* to do it and *how* to do it!

How does a Christian determine the right time and procedure for “dating” and “marriage”? Circumstances or peace in the heart are not the best principles with regard to dating and marriage. A Christian should study the commands, prohibitions and wisdom of the Bible, ask advice from mature and godly counsellors, pray about everything and then make a wise decision.

(T) Third. The foolishness of haste and laziness.

What does the Bible say about people who ignore the proper time and proper procedure? People who are either *too hasty* or *too slow* to do things are “fools”.

People who are too hasty are fools. Proverbs 19:2 teaches, “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way”. People who are hasty, are impatient and therefore continually miss the right way. They miss the proper time and they neglect the proper procedure. Because the fool is too hasty, he ruins his life and he ruins the life of others. But he still does not take responsibility for his deeds. Proverbs 19:3 says, “A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord”. While the wise take responsibility for their own lives, fools always blame God for everything that goes wrong.

People who are too slow are fools. Proverbs 24:30-34 describes the life of a lazy person. “I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgement; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man”. Because the fool is too lazy to do the right thing, he ruins his life. The fool always waits for “a later time”, but that later time never arrives. People who are lazy also miss God’s proper time and God’s proper procedure. That is why in Proverbs 6:6-11 God gives advice to the lazy fool, “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest”.

Thus, God says that people who are not convinced that there is a proper time and proper procedure for every matter, are fools. They either do things too hastily or they neglect to do things in the proper time.

(S) Fourth. The wisdom of patience.

What does the Bible teach about “patience”? People, who are patient and do things at the proper time, are “wise”.

“Patience” is “the love that can wait”. In 1 Corinthians 13:4, the apostle Paul teaches, “Love is patient”. Patience is listed as the first part of love, because this is usually where love begins. Love does not enforce kindness, but can wait to show kindness. Love does not rush in to act, but can wait for God’s prompting to show love. Thus patience is *the reins which God uses to control the expression of love*. Patience waits for God to work things out in people’s lives as well as in circumstances. While patience waits, it expresses itself in the beautiful ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Patience endures difficulties, like provocation, pain and people’s weaknesses, without getting irritated, discouraged or angry. Patience applied to the special friendship between a man and a woman is that *you can wait* and *you have decided to wait*, because you seek the best for your friend. You can endure difficulties and pain in your relationship without getting discouraged or irritated. You do not enforce the expression of your love on your friend, but can wait for God’s prompting to show love.

“Patience is also the wisdom that can wait”. Proverbs 19:11 teaches, “A man’s wisdom gives him patience”. Wisdom waits for God’s proper time for everything. Wisdom does everything according to God’s proper procedure. For example, Proverbs 15:23 teaches, “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply - and how good is a timely word”. Men and women should learn when to speak about dating and marriage and when to wait to speak about these things! Another example, Proverbs 24:27 teaches, “Finish your outdoor work and get your fields ready; after that, build your house”. Men and women should learn to first finish their essential preparation for life and then to date and marry! *Possible applications* for men and women are the following: One. Complete your studies and become financially independent before you begin a serious friendship with another person with a view to marriage. Two. Grow to Christian maturity and gain more experience in Christian training and service before you marry. Three. Give more time to win the approval of your parents or leaders in the church before you rush into dating and marriage. In most cases, parents and church leaders give wise counsel. In order to know what is the proper time and proper procedure with respect to dating and marriage, Proverbs 16:3 advises, “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed”! What a blessing awaits the wise man!

(T) Fifth. The examples impatience and patience of four couples.

The Bible describes the consequences of two couples who did not wait for God’s proper time and who ignored God’s proper procedure.

The first couple was David and Batsheba. In 2 Samuel 11:1-17, David saw Batsheba and got infatuated with her. “Infatuation” is an unreasonably strong emotion accompanied with physical passion. It is the one-sided love for someone’s body and not for the other aspects of that person. Moreover, Batsheba was the wife of another person and God forbids all interference in another person’s marriage! Instead of obeying God, David acted on his strong feelings and *slept with* her. The consequences were terrible! Batsheba got pregnant, David murdered her husband and finally the child died.

The second couple is Amnon and Tamar. In 2 Samuel 13:1-22, Amnon saw Tamar and got infatuated with her. But Tamar was his sister. God forbids an intimate relationship with a family member (Lev 20:17). Amnon did not wait for God to show him the right way, the right time and the right procedure with the right woman. Instead, he acted on his strong physical passion and *raped* her! The consequences were terrible! Tamar thought that her whole life and future was ruined and Amnon was murdered by his brother.

The Bible also describes the consequences of a couple who waited for God’s proper time and who followed God’s proper procedure.

The third couple is Jacob and Rachel. In Genesis 29:15-20, Jacob loved Rachel and worked and waited seven years, before her father allowed them to get married! The Bible says that these seven years “seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her”. The consequences of waiting for God’s proper time and proper procedure are a great blessing. Jacob did not think that seven years were too long to wait for someone he loved. Jacob did not express his love for Rachel by using her to satisfy his own desires, but he expressed his love for her by *waiting* for her and *working* for her. Later God blessed Jacob and Rachel with wonderful children, Joseph and Benjamin.

The fourth couple is Boaz and Ruth. After they followed the proper time and proper procedure for dating and marriage God blessed them!

(S) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is “Proper timing” and the reference is Ecclesiastes 8:5b-6a. Let us memorise the Bible verse together.

(T+S) Proper timing: Ecclesiastes 8:5-6. The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.

(T) Proper timing: Ecclesiastes 8:5-6. The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.

(T+S) Proper timing: Ecclesiastes 8:5-6. The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter. Ecclesiastes 8:5-6.

(S) Proper timing: Ecclesiastes 8:5-6. The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter. Ecclesiastes 8:5-6.

(T) **POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED**

Let us review the last 2 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.

Same life goals. Amos 3:3. ““Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?” Amos 3:3.

(S) Self-control. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5. “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God”. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.

(T) **POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.