

1991 Torrey Marriage and Relationships Part 2

By Alisa Grace

Alisa Grace:

And his righteousness, and then all these things will be added to you. Wow, that's a pretty hefty promise. What are all these things that are added to you? What are all the things that he promises to add to us if we look for his Kingdom and his righteousness first? It's his perfect will that he promises to add to us that we can know intimately. Well, after Chris and I began praying specifically about our relationship and searching for where God wanted us to go, we started asking ourselves some really important questions and the ones that anybody can ask and that you should be asking the whole entire time that you are dating someone, whether it's casually or even more so if you're dating someone on an exclusive basis and getting to the point where you're starting to think about that big step, that big battlefield.

Since I took these just for a list for you to help get some continuity to it from the Family Life conference that Campus Crusade for Christ International puts on. And the first one that Chris and I started looking at was, do we both have a heart for God? You can be a Christian, and your heart for God can be lacking. I think each of us has probably experienced that, if not known someone in that situation.

But look at your partner. I was looking at Chris, and I was thinking, does he have a heart for God? Do I have a heart for God? And even more specifically, we asked, Is Jesus Christ at the center of our relationship? One of the most wonderful things that I began learning about Chris is we got to know more and more about each other was that he was a man of God, that he truly

loved God with all of his heart. And that meant so much to me because I've been in relationships before, like a lot of you guys have, where you're either dating a non-Christian or you date someone whose walk is not that strong.

So we began to ask, Is Christ at the center of each of our lives? Is he number one? Does football come first? Does your choir practice come first? The school come first? Or is it Christ in both of your lives? Is he number one? Then the second specific question we asked is, are we both actively pursuing God? Are we both taking the time to invest in ourselves, our relationship with Christ? Are we spending time alone with God? Are we doing Scripture memory? Are we doing any kind of discipleship programs, going through either where we are being disciplined or we're discipling someone else?

Are we both actively growing as individuals and then also as a couple? The third question, what is the history of the other person's walk? What do you know about their walk with Christ prior to your meeting? Has it been one that's characterized by spiritual growth and abundance? Or has it been one that's been kind of a stumbling block and not really a strong, close walk with the Lord. Take time to find out what their spiritual history is, what it's been like up until the point that you've met and then always, always, always remember that a person's ability to forgive and to grant forgiveness is inevitably tied to their relationship with God.

Let me say that one more time for you, a person's ability to forgive and to grant forgiveness is tied into the relationship with God. This is so very important because forgiveness is a big area that you'll have involved in your marriage. And some of the decisions that you're making right

now as you're dating, maybe as you're engaged, even already, will affect your marriage down the road. You may not get married for another 5-10 years from now, but the choices and the decisions that you make right now are affecting that marriage somewhere down the road.

And you've got to realize if you're looking at a special person, the inability to forgive or to ask forgiveness is a sign of spiritual immaturity. It's a tell-tale sign, something that should be a red flag that goes up instantly. Okay, so after we began to ask some of those questions, another question that we asked was, am I putting God's desires ahead of my own? Is my relationship with Chris, is that my desire, or is it God's desire? Are they one in the same, or are they going two different directions?

I think as that summer went by, as Chris and I were writing back and forth to each other, it was the most wonderful thing. We just really had a fairytale romance, and a lot of that was because he was in Colorado, and I was in Texas, and we dated long distance until the very day that we got married. And yeah, I tell you that's hard. You go about six weeks in between where you don't see each other. Oh, it is so hard on your heart, but it can happen if you are dating someone that is long distance.

Let me give you that encouragement. How many of you do you all date somebody that is not here at Biola? Alright, take that as a sign of encouragement. It can work. It can work. So as these feelings, as we were writing back and forth to each other and getting to know each other, it was such a wonderful experience. It was just the most wonderful thing you could ever imagine. And yet at the same time, it was so wonderfully frightening because it was becoming very intense and

it was picking up speed rapidly between the two of us, our intense feelings for each other and the seriousness with where we were at that stage in our lives.

I was 21 whenever we met and Chris was 24, and when we married, I was 22 and Chris was 25.

And so about that time, well, you know that it's very likely that during your college years, you might marry the person you will meet, the person that you will marry. So we knew that there was an intensity to this part of our relationship. So we knew that we needed to start grabbing hold of the reins of our heart and start pulling back and slow the horse down a little bit.

And we really needed to get serious about praying where God was leading this relationship, because if it was not going to be leading to marriage, then we wanted to go ahead and put a stop to it because it was becoming very serious. So we really began to get down on our knees and really get one on one time with the Lord. And we begin to pray individually and as a couple, Psalm 37:4. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

I just have to tell you guys, it was really fun as I was working on this part of our talk because I was using Chris' Bible. I was back in the room and I was going over some of the scriptures. And as I looked this one up, Psalm 37:4 is going now, what was that one about desires of the heart that we really prayed about? And I wanted to go back and look for it. And I finally found it. And it was so fun because in Chris's Bible, I found the verse circled and he had a little date of September, 1986.

It was so neat because I knew that that was that was the mark at the time, that that was a really important verse for us because we had just met in April. And then we got engaged in January, and this was right about the middle of it. So it was really neat to be able to go back and look and see that that was something that he had taken really seriously and to see that little note in the sidelines of his Bible. So then why does God give us the desires of our heart?

We delight ourselves in Him. But I mean, is it like a token of his appreciation for asking his opinion? No. Why does he give us the desires of his heart? It's because as we delight ourself in him and we grow closer in him, we become absorbed into him. We gain his heart and his desires. Our heart becomes more like his heart. Our desires become more like his desires. We are the ones that do the changing. He doesn't change. It's not like, okay, I'm going to read my verse and God will give me anything I want.

No, it doesn't work like that. We are the ones that change. We're absorbed into him, and his desires become our desires. So next we begin to ask, will this relationship increase my personal knowledge in my personal relationship with Christ? I had to look at myself and look at my walk where it was personally. And I began to ask myself, Is my relationship with Chris detrimental to my walk, or does he encourage me spiritually? Does he encourage my growth in my personal walk? You know, whenever you're standing up on a chair and you've got somebody by the hand that's pulling on you, which one is the one that's going to win?

The one that's down there? Are you up on the chair? The one on the bottom, it's much easily pulled down than it is to pull someone up. So I ask yourself, does this person help me and

encourage me to grow? Does this person help me to know Christ more intimately and in a more personal way? And then how many of you guys have ever read the book Choices by Paula and Stacey Reinhart? Have you ever heard of that book? Oh, if you haven't, it is wonderful.

They have it over in the bookstore. And I would highly recommend that if you are even in the least bit interested in dating, which I would gather that you are if you're here today. This is an excellent book and an excellent Bible study to work through with a group on your floor to get some gals, like on the hall and do a group study or to get some couples and do a group study. It's excellent. It's called Choices by Paula and Stacey Reinhart. You'll see it in the back in the book reference section.

But one of the questions that they encourage you to ask is, do we share a common mission in life? Is the calling for the mission in your life? Whatever God has called you to do, is it compatible with what God has called your significant other to do? Has God called you to an inner city ministry and the other one to minister to the people in Beverly Hills? Those aren't really compatible, are they? Do you have a compatible mission in your life with the other person? Well, what if you don't know exactly what your mission is?

How many of you know exactly what God has called you to do for at least the next ten years of your life? Raise your hand. Good. Most of you were like me. I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing either. I have no idea when people used to ask that question. I was just like, Gosh, I don't know yet. I don't know. I don't know. What, I'm only 21 years old. I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing yet. I don't know what I want to do yet.

So what do you do then? Are you just stuck? And it's kind of like, 'well, I'll deal with it later'? No one of the important step you can take if you're in that situation like I was where you don't know what your ministry is, what you don't know what that specific mission is that God is calling you to yet, look at the other person and ask yourself, is my significant other's mission in life acceptable to me? Is it something that it's like, yeah, I could do that.

That is something that I could look at, that I would be interested in doing. Or is it something like, I know God has not called me to be in a missionary in Africa. You just look at it and say, Well, I may not know what I'm supposed to do, but I know that this is either acceptable to me or I know for sure that this is not acceptable to me. So I pretty well know that this God is probably not calling us together. Just find out what is acceptable.

Does it look like something that you would be able to live with the rest of your life? Can you realistically adjust to it? And so finally, the last really important step that Chris and I took was, we began to seek Godly counsel first from some other people. First of all, we asked them. We sat down and talked with some mature Christians. This Godly couple, Mike and Victoria Dodson. Mike is the one who actually married Chris and me. And they are such a Godly couple. They're the kind that have these three kids that are so well-behaved and they make you want to have a family because you love being around the kids and the way they treat each other.

You love to be around them. And it's just they had such a Godly marriage and such a Godly family that we knew that with the history of Chris's family and his parents' marriage and my

parents' marriage, there wasn't a whole lot of modeling going on in our growing up years. And so this is the couple that we look to to model our marriage after and to learn a lot from. And I highly encourage you to find someone like that. If not your own parents, then find someone in your church or someone in a ministry on campus or a professor or someone that you and your significant other can spend time with.

One on one as couples, and learn from them and see the way they model their marriage and the way they treat each other. That's so important. It's such an important ingredient for a young couple that is just starting out and starting to look at marriage and then also counsel with your parents. They know you so well. And chances are, if you've been dating this significant other for a while, excuse me, that they probably know the person that you're starting to think a little bit seriously about.

I know that I sit down and talk with my mom and discuss with her what she thought about Chris and me talking about marriage, which was probably not the most objective person for me to talk to because my mom thinks Chris hung the sun, moon and stars. My mom was one of these people. It really is wonderful. She's one of those that, oh, no one's ever gonna be good enough for my daughters. There's things that were important and what to watch out for. So she was someone that I really counseled with.

And then a third group of people you can seek some Counsel with are some friends that know you both. That was a little hard for Chris and me since he was in Colorado and since I was in Texas. But it's hard to find one group of people who knew both of us. So we just went to friends

that each of us had in our own separate cities. But if you have some friends on campus here that know both of you, sit down with them individually, apart from your person that you're thinking about becoming very serious with and just ask them what they see are some strength or some weaknesses and what they think as a Godly friend, what they think about the possibilities of your relationship leading to marriage.

That's a real important step. Proverbs 15:22. This isn't in your notes, but I like to at least make a note about it, because that's a good promise to claim. Proverbs 15:22: "Without Counsel plans are frustrated, but with many counselors, they succeed." It's Proverbs 15:22. Okay, so you've gone through all these steps. You've consulted the Bible. You've looked at some of these gray areas that the Bible isn't really specific about, but it lays some good principles down for you. You think about it, Am I putting God's desires ahead of my own?

And will this relationship increase my personal knowledge of Christ and you seek Godly counsel? Well, by this time, if you're still not 100% sure, which can really happen, it's a big possibility. You might still be riding the fence. Well, at that point, I think what you need to do, is get down to business with God, because if you're serious enough to ask those first three or four questions that I would say your relationship is probably pretty serious, and you need to make a decision one way or the other.

If this is of a relationship you're going to continue or if you're not, am I stringing this person along? So if you have been serious enough to go through those first four questions and you're still not sure you need to get down to business with God, you need to get some time alone. Both

of you is what we encourage, to plan a weekend or get a 48 hours period of time set aside where each of you, you and your boyfriend, you and your girlfriend can get some time alone with God separately.

And it would be a great idea to take this little sheet along with you and have you both go through some of the same steps together to confirm where God is leading you. If he is leading you together, or if he is not leading together, he's instead leading apart. Okay, so these are just some guidelines for some steps that you should take during that 48 hours period. You can change them up, but these are just some suggestions that were included with a family life conference handbook.

Step one, you need to take a spiritual inventory of yourself. Ask yourself, Am I right with God? Am I confessed up to date? Do I have any sin that is standing in the way between me and the Lord and Him communicating His will to me? Psalm 66:18 says: "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." They're going to bounce off the ceiling if you're not confessed up. If you don't have that way clear to God, you need to get right before God.

Get down on your knees and confess your sins and get confessed up to date and relinquish all rights to your to your own life and give them to God. God, this is my life. I want to know what you want to do with it. I want to know if Chris is the man that you have for me to marry. So second of all, the second step you need to take is get a pencil and a piece of paper and actually write out a list of your fears.

Now, some of you might need a couple of pieces of paper, but get a piece of paper and pen. Write out your fears. It is very, very important that you literally write them down in black and white so you can go back and look at them. That way, it helps get your thoughts in line, gets them down on paper and gives you a little bit more clarity of thought. If you go ahead and write them down and then you need to confess or acknowledge them to God.

Read John--1 John 1:9. How many of you all know that one? First one. Nine. I call that my spiritual bar of soap. I like that one. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and he is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So we get in the right mind and in a right relationship with God as we seek His will. And as you do that, it's time to come to--come to a point where you make a decision.

Lord, I feel like you are leading Chris and I together and I feel like he is the one that you want for me to marry and that this is in your will. Or, you make a decision that, Lord, I really feel like you are leading Chris and me apart. I really-- send your peace that this is not what I need to be doing. But you need to go ahead and make a commitment that you will either accept this person as God's provision for your needs, or you will agree to reject this person as God's provision for your needs.

You will either say yes, this is the person that I will marry, that I feel you're leading me to, Lord. Or Lord, I feel that you are not leading us together, and I commit to go ahead and release this person from the relationship. So step five, once you have made that commitment to either accept or reject the person as God provision for your need, write that commitment down that second

sheet of paper you wrote to fears on your first piece of paper. So on your second piece of paper, write down that commitment what you just told God that you would be committed to do if you cannot receive him or her as God's provision.

Then you need to write down a resolution that will release that person from your relationship again. It's so very important to actually take the time and write it down. Word for word. It gives you more clarity of thought, and it gives you more accountability to yourself and to the Lord, because you have actually written it down and put your thoughts on paper. And then hold that decision privately for about 24 hours and continue to be praying for confirmation for clarity during that 24 hours, confirming God. Confirming that commitment that you've made and whatever, whatever, whatever you do, do not move forward in that relationship one way or the other without God's peace.

Wait on his timing. Wait on his direction. Do not move forward if you do not have a peace about it in your heart, one way or the other. God takes this time when we are still, when we focus our thoughts on him to communicate what he wants to us. And if we're still and our thoughts are focused on him and we've blocked the other things out, it allows him a time to put a peace in our heart with the direction that we feel that he has given us.

So the next to last step you do is tell a friend. Pick one close friend that you trust with the responsibility of this commitment that you've made and tell them, share that with them, bounce it off of them and see to see what they think. It helps them to confirm your decision for you and say, you know, I really feel like that sounds good that the Lord might be leaning that way, and

then it also gives you someone to hold you accountable to the decision you've made, because it's real easy if it's not a real comfortable decision to back down and you need somebody that can help hold you accountable to say, hey, have you talked to--have you talked to Chris yet?

Have you told him that yes, you want to marry him or that no, you think that the Lord might be leading you apart. So pick that one close friend and help them to help hold you accountable. And then step eight is the big moment of decision and the moment that both of you been waiting for. It's when you verbalize your decision to one another, and there should be an agreement with both of you. I would say if one ends up saying yes, God has told me you're the one that I need to marry, and the other one is saying, Gosh, what a coincidence. He told me that you're not.

Then the way that I would interpret that would be to me that you either need to go back and go back through steps one through eight, one more time, or that God is leading you apart and that you need to release the relationship because God must be in agreement with himself. He will not contradict himself between the two of you. So either it's both yes or it's no. Okay, it's a real hard one. Okay, so what if God is saying no?

What if you got to that point to where this just isn't where God is leading us and we feel this way and we see it and we realize it. Then what? It is essential that you make a clean break in the relationship very quickly within a matter of hours, if not days. Or days, if not hours. It is essential that you make it quick and clean, too. If you don't, procrastination can lead you back into indecision, it gives Satan time to maneuver and to work his way back in and to cloud your decision and to get you back to that point of indecisiveness.

So move cleanly and quickly and don't procrastinate on it. Take care of business as soon as possible. And two, we strongly suggest that if you are breaking the relationship that you don't communicate with each other for about six months, and why is it like, that big of a deal?

Because, yeah, it really is. You both need that time to be able to sort out your feelings and to be able to let the healing process begin. Because if your relationship has gotten to the point where it's that serious where you've begun consulting the Lord about marriage, and you've talked about the possibility of it and all of a sudden, you've both gotten the message, stop. Don't go any further. This, isn't it.

That's a painful process to go through. Like Chris talked about, you experience that pain of a breakup, and you need the time, both of you, for that healing process to begin and to sort out the feelings and the emotions that go with a break up like that, it can be really tough. And the third thing, if and this is a big if, if you question that God may be leading the relationship back together at some point in time, then wise counsel should be sought before you make the contact with that person.

It is not fair to them to call up and say, hey, you know, it's been six or seven months, and I really feel that God may be leading us back. Let's pray through it one more time. How much more pain can your heart take than something like that? It is so essential that you get some wise counsel from mature Christians, some of those parents and your friends again before you make the contact with the other person. Don't put them through it if the Lord is still shutting that door and saying no. If he's still saying no, or maybe he's saying not yet or not right now.

So I like this one. I like number E. What have you seen? Yes. Go for it. Do it. This is the person I have for you. You've got green lights, the doors are opened up and you need to go for it. But you still have those little nagging doubt. Oh, Lord, I'm excited, but I'm just not sure which can be very typical. Don't feel bad because I think it's a moment that most people wait for all of their lives growing up wondering, who am I going to marry?

What is it going to look like, or what is she going to look like, what's their personalities going to be like? So what if this is the person that you still have a couple of those little doubts and you're really not sure what to do? First thing you need to do is sit down with your significant other, with that special person and talk about those doubts and fears. Discuss them, talk them out and get some closure to them, deal with them as they arise, because it might not be just at the very beginning when you're making that decision to get engaged, they may come and pop up throughout your engagement period, so deal with them as they arise.

Don't feel so threatened by them because it's a very normal reaction to have a couple of doubts here and there and you address them maturely and discuss them and work them out. And the second thing is become accountable for your decision to other people. That same friend that you told what your decision, that. Yes, this is the person I'm supposed to marry and they confirmed it and held you accountable. Talk about some of those doubts and help them to hold you accountable to that decision that you've already made.

And if, this is also another big if, if you are still feeling totally overwhelmed with doubt that you can't control and that the Lord has not taken away from you than that, I believe, is a sign that you need to break the relationship again. It is not fair to string the other person along when you are totally, totally overwhelmed with doubts and you're just not sure, and the Lord has chosen not to remove those from you, then you need to break the relationship and go back to the section D and take a look at that.

But I want to add an important note that being overwhelmed with doubts is very, very different from pre-wedding jitters. They're so different because everybody goes through those pre wedding jitters, just about. Don't let a briefcase of cold feet or pre-wedding jitters scare you because it is a very common response to such a big, big commitment. The whole first hour we talked about what a big commitment is and that should scare you. And you'll probably be thinking about that, if not the moment that you walk right up the aisle.

But don't let it scare you. If you've got the confirmation from God that this is what you need to do, then have faith in him that he is doing and leading you in the right way. Hebrews 11:6 says "And without faith, it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him." You've gone through all those steps, asking yourself all those questions about yourself, about your special person. You've taken time to get one on one with God, to spend some time in the word, to ask your friends, ask other mature Christians.

And if he has continually confirmed that and given you what we always call green lights, there were no red lights ever that popped up for us. They were all green lights. Then have that faith that God is leading you together, put your trust in him because he said he would instruct you and he would teach you. And you've claimed those promises, and you thank him for fulfilling those promises to you. Okay. So those are just some suggestions of some steps that you can take that were very similar to the steps that Chris and I took.

That worked out very well for us. So I'll tell you what, why don't y'all stand up and we'll take about a five minute stretch break, and then we're going to you want to start till tomorrow? We'll just close in prayer and we'll pick up tomorrow starting off with some myths in love. So go ahead and stand up and we'll have a prayer real quick. We'll skip the break, we'll go ahead and pray and close right now.

Speaker 1:

What we have for tomorrow is we had a number of these made. If if you need one of these, your best bet is to probably find somebody sitting next to you and just make a quick copy. That would be best. We will continue tomorrow continuing the thing we're going to talk about what is love.

What are some myths that people carry with them into love? And then what are some Nevers that should occur or should never occur in a marriage or in a dating relationship. Okay, that's for next time.

So if you don't have one of these, find somebody to get a copy of it or if not, come out customer. We'll try and get some copies. So let's pray and we'll end here. Right.

Alisa Grace:

Lord, how we thank you so much for the beauty of marriage and the relationships that lead to that point. And, Lord, the seriousness of them that we need to take. And we continually lay them before you. And we look to you because we have your promises that you want us to know. We don't want to be in the dark, Lord, we want your will. And we want to know what that is or so that we can be faithful to you. And we can have a Godly marriage that ministers not only to ourselves, but to those around us, Lord, and that brings glory to your name.

And Lord, we thank you for our time together. And I pray for each one of these students as they're contemplating relationships in their own lives, Father, that they would look to you and that they would leave their dependence on you, that they would take themselves off the altar and their own desires of the altar, Lord, and that they would be absorbed into you and, Lord, that your desires would become their desires. Lord, we just want to express to you our love and our commitment to you again.

And to say that we need you for today. And these things we pray in Christ's precious, precious name. Amen.

Speaker 1:

Okay. One last thing, too. Since some of you won't be able to make tomorrow's meeting just as you're standing there. Are there any questions you might have for those who may not be coming back or there might be a question or two that you would like to ask? We have about seven or so minutes. Yeah. Okay. We have one here. And then we'll--

Audience:

Is the tape available?

Speaker 1:

Is the tape available? Is there a tape? I don't know. But there should have been. You made one.

Okay. Could you make about 400 copies of that?

Alisa Grace:

The lowest down here, if you need a copy.

Speaker 1:

Sorry. I guess they didn't. Anybody else maybe have a question, as you extra papers? No. There's two more. Two or three. You come up and see us too. Let's do it that way. You're dismissed, see you next time. Come on up and we'll visit that way. Excellent.