



# Issacharian Daughters

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Dear Girls,

## BEAUTIFUL WORDS — MY ENGAGEMENT STORY, PART 1

I have always believed that if it was part of God's sovereign plan for me to marry, that He was preparing me for a young man and preparing a young man for me. I didn't need to worry about who he was, for the Scriptures indicated that the Lord would — as He does all things else — bring a marriage about in His perfect timing.

I am 27, and knowing about His sovereignty has been a wonderful and beautiful thing in my life. It has given me the freedom to concentrate on what God wants me to do **now** without worrying about the future; the freedom to do the job God has for me of assisting my parents and strengthening my family; and the freedom to engage in the ministries God has given of discipling my younger siblings, encouraging my parents, building into the lives of younger girls in the church and throughout the world through the *Issacharian Daughters* newsletter.

Knowing that God is sovereign has enabled me to be content, to trust God in two ways: 1) to know the desires of my heart and 2) to give me what was best for me, either singleness or marriage; and if marriage, then to the right sort of man.

All these years God has been saying to me, "I am sovereign. Believe in me. Trust in Me. Be content. Have faith. Have hope. Pursue Purity. Obey Me." And guess what I recently discovered? While I have been trying to do all these things with the help of the Holy Spirit, He has been preparing someone for me who fulfils the desires of my heart and then some, who is a gift far beyond anything I could have dreamed of, hoped for or believed was possible! I can't help but get this picture of God smilingly encouraging me along and knowing what a treat He had in store for me just around the corner. "Be patient!"

A few months ago my dad gave a young man permission to court me. Let me tell you how God organised it:

Some time ago some friends of ours moved to Geelong, Australia, to study at a seminary. A young man called Jonathan was also at the seminary. He was planning a trip to New Zealand, and our friends said, "You have to visit the Smiths." So he did. This was back in 2004. At the time he visited, we had some other folks over as well, so the responsibility to entertain him fell in my direction. This arrangement is not automatically approved of in our home, but the "emotional safety" features included him being of a different theological persuasion and also quite a bit shorter than me. So we felt free to talk through a number of subjects together. At one point we talked about courtship, and I shared with him a list of things I was looking for in a future husband. It was in a funny format — a *Wanted* poster — that I had drawn up for some friends to say thanks for giving me a hope chest. In spite of the humorous format, Jonathan commented that he was really encouraged to find that there are girls out there who are looking for high standards in a future husband and are themselves working towards being capable helpmeets for such men. Some of the things I had listed on the poster were that he would be a man of God, a staunch advocate of home

education, someone who could teach me rather than visa versa, someone who had developed good relationships with members of his own family and had a vision for using his family as a tool for ministry and fulfilling the dominion mandate.

Jonathan asked if he could take a copy of the poster away with him as it would encourage him to aim higher himself. I said sure. When back in Australia, he rang and asked if he could share the poster with some friends of his, "Not that anything would come out of it, but so that they could be encouraged, as I am, that there **are** girls with high standards around," he said. Again I said sure and didn't think anything more of it.

Then in 2006 Jonathan rang me again. He was planning a trip to the USA and remembered that I'd recommended some ministries to look up over there. Did I have any updated information in this regard? As it happened, Dad was sending me over there to attend the History of the World Mega-Conference, and I told Jonathan that this was a not-to-be-missed event. So that became part of his itinerary. We had a few conversations over the week and when we were both back in our respective countries, he rang me again and asked if there was "anyone on the horizon" for me. Not sure what was coming next, I replied that there was not. Well, Jonathan said he had a friend, Pete de Deugd, who believed the same as I did, had the same convictions, a similar personality, was going in the same direction... Jonathan thought there was a high likelihood of there being a good match.

He said he'd already talked to Pete about me a couple of times. How would it work if Pete were to contact my dad? I said it would be easy for Dad to determine quickly whether it was a goer or not and that Pete would be welcome to visit here and befriend the whole family without having to commit to marriage from the first letter! Jonathan relayed all this to Pete. Shortly afterwards Dad and Mum and I got a letter of reference from Jonathan saying that he had told Pete all about me and wanted to tell us all about Pete. It was a really good letter. A couple of weeks later Dad got a letter of introduction from Pete.

Dad and Pete wrote back and forth for seven months. It would have been easy if Pete didn't believe the same as us. The communication wouldn't have lasted long at all. But the more they communicated back and forth, the clearer it was that there was a huge amount of common ground, unity of thought and vision. In fact there was little if any disagreement. So Dad invited Pete to come and visit us, which he did in June. Everyone knew why Pete was visiting, and as Dad had approved Pete through their communication, I was free to allow Pete to get to know me and to seek to get to know him. So we spent a great deal of time asking one another questions.



*While Pete was visiting us he helped Dad with a job. Here is a picture of us under the house finishing off the job. In front of me are, "The Questions," lying there with me in the mud. We took every opportunity to discuss them.*

A year earlier an American friend had given me forty pages of questions that "courtin' couples" would like to ask one another. The questions covered everything from convictions to preferences to ideas and experiences and likes and dislikes. With these questions in front of us, we just talked about everything under the sun. Every morning I would also spend time talking with Dad and discussing with him what we were learning about Pete. And every evening Pete and Dad would get together for a mutual question and answer session, Pete being especially concerned that he was honouring Dad's position, role

and responsibilities as my father and protector and that he was not engaging emotions prematurely. Pete really made sure Dad was happy with all of this. We were all very impressed by the end of his 10-day stay.

Through his letters we'd gotten to know that he was a man of humility, integrity, diligence and that he was a hard worker and shared the same convictions and direction as us. When he visited, all of this was confirmed — as well as that he was very thoughtful, kind, patient, deeply serious about life yet with a great sense of humour and a thorough gentleman. And besides that, he and I felt comfortable around one another and could converse easily. We had a great camaraderie from the start.

Pete and I were both looking for specific things in a future spouse. We have a lot of convictions and wanted to be sure that if we married, it would be an equal yoking. So some of the questions we asked one another were: Are we desirous of looking after our parents as they grow older and unable to care for themselves? Do we desire debt-free living? What is our reaction to obtaining a loan or taking government handouts? What do we believe about children? Are they a blessing? How would we tackle the responsibility of children? How would we teach them, train them, discipline them, disciple them? As Pete and I discussed these sorts of things, it was apparent that we had the same desires in all these areas. This is what I had been waiting for!

When he got home, Pete told his parents about the trip and asked for their blessing to court me. Now when Jonathan had first told Pete about me, Mr de Deugd had gone online and had Googled me. He read my articles and interviews online and found out about us Smiths through our website. He was so keen back then that he'd told Pete he'd buy Pete and Mrs de Deugd tickets to fly over and visit us straight away! So when Pete told his parents of the success of his trip and asked for their blessing on courting me, they had no hesitation in giving it.

As a courtship was evidently the next step, Dad and Mum and I thought it would be a good idea for us to travel to Australia to see Pete in his natural environment, to meet his parents and see how he related to them before officially entering into a courtship. So we quickly planned a trip to visit there in July.

The trip was a real blessing and an important part of our growing friendship. My parents and his parents got on like a house on fire! I really liked his parents and felt within a short period of time that if it was possible to order grandparents for one's children, I would want to order Mr and Mrs de Deugd.



It was wonderful to observe Pete treating his father with honour and his mother like a queen. He was so gentle and tender with her.

I met a lot of Pete's friends, neighbours, relatives, church friends and some of his



customers. They all made a point of telling me what a treasure he was, like pure gold, how skilled he was, what potential and talent he had and how good he was to work for and with. He has lived in the same place all his life and attended the same church for 20 years, so it was really wonderful hearing these things. I haven't had the advantage of observing Pete over a long period of time, but these people, through their common report, made it obvious that he had a sterling reputation.

Two married women who are friends with Pete (one who has known him for 13 years and the other for 10 years) both opened their hearts to me and offered friendship...we are now writing. This was lovely! When Pete and I marry, and I move to Australia, it is wonderful to know that I already have friends there. You see, God is as sovereign over friendships as He is over marriages. He didn't need to organise kindred spirits for me, but He has! And I thank Him for it!

My time in Australia was spent doing more talking. The discussions between Pete and I and his parents and my parents were really great. It was wonderful getting to know Pete and his parents and also spending time helping Pete with his woodworking business. The de Deugds took us out sightseeing as well which was lovely. Towards the end of the trip when our courtship became official, Pete said to his mum, "Mr Smith has given me permission to pursue his daughter." Mrs de Deugd flew to me and gave me a big bear hug and said to Pete, "Well, you better pursue her hard!"

A couple of days later we Smiths returned to New Zealand. Pete and I continued to email one another and also began talking on the phone each day. We did this for nearly two months until September when Pete came to New Zealand again for four days. Talking on the phone was wonderful. We shared normal friendly things such as what we were doing each day and also talked about theological and philosophical subjects such as the approaches we would take to teaching our own children at home. We'd often read and discuss articles and discuss the husband and wife roles. Pete initiated listening to some sermons on marriage by Joel Beeke and Joe Morecraft III on [sermonaudio.com](http://sermonaudio.com) and discussing these, which was wonderful.



Pete is self employed and owns his own mill and woodworking establishment. He has been building up this woodworking business of his and preparing to support a family since he was about 14. His vision with his business is that it be something his wife and children can help him in. That thrills me, because I had hoped to marry someone who I could really help in such a tangible way. When families work on something together, it can really strengthen the family and pull them closer together.

Pete said to me recently that the fact I have been working to help Dad without being paid really gave him confidence; in fact it inspired and encouraged him to think that I really would be loyal to him in the same way, and that I would be willing to work and help him without always wanting to go off and do my own thing or pursue my own life. The idea that I'd be desirous of being *his* helper and working to make him and our family successful and strengthen us rather than working to make myself successful and fulfill myself was very precious to him. And it was moreso to him because it wasn't just an idea to me, but

something I was actually doing now in my own family. And in seeking to die to myself and serve in my family, I have found that I have been very, very fulfilled.

The week after we Smiths arrived back in New Zealand, Dad and Pete talked on the phone a few times. I was blissfully unaware that this was going on, which is good as they were discussing such things as what my favourite place was in Palmerston North and where would be a good place to propose!

So by the time Pete came and visited in September, it turned out that he'd had a ring for about a month and a half or so and was eager to propose. The first day of his visit we went for a picnic at a favourite place of mine — a little white church built in 1895 which had a church bell and was surrounded by beautiful gardens and a white picket fence. We explored the gardens and decided to have our picnic sitting on a bridge with our feet dangling over a stream.

After we'd eaten, Pete said he had a gift for me. He told me he had made me some flowers. Knowing of his incredible woodworking skills, I was imagining 3D flowers made from maple or something! He pulled out a gift-wrapped box. I unwrapped it to discover an exquisite wooden box which Pete had made with a myrtle burl veneer and flower marquetry on the top. He had used beautiful woods such as ebony and sycamore to make the inlaid flowers. The box was locked, and he inquired if I'd like to see inside the box. Naturally I said yes, and he handed me a beautiful old-fashioned key. It turned smoothly, and when I lifted the lid it was to see the most beautiful ring sparkling away sitting in the bottom of the box in a sea of blue satin. That is when Pete spoke those beautiful words I told you about in the *Issacharian Daughters* newsletter ID056 — Beautiful Words: "Will you marry me?" (See <http://www.hef.org.nz/page/890437>)



When we arrived home, I was expecting to show the ring to my family and tell them that we were engaged. Instead my family was showing us some engagement party invitations they had drawn up. "Could we quickly check them, and then they'd send them out?" Apparently, knowing that Pete planned to propose, they were hoping he'd do it on his first day with us so we could have an engagement party two days later on the Saturday night. They'd been planning this for quite some time and had told a number of people, "Keep this day free. There might be an engagement party!" I just had to laugh! What a wonderful family I have!

So there you have the history! I couldn't have orchestrated this. It is a story of how I was found! It is a story of how the Lord brought two people together into a courtship and an engagement, and Lord willing, He will bring our engagement into a marriage in the future.

For the Greater Glory of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

Genevieve Smith  
Issacharian Daughter