

# Courtship

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### Introduction

- A. The Bible does not say a great deal about courtship, at least not directly.
  - 1. It does talk about seeking a wife (I Cor. 7:27) and finding a wife (Prov. 18:22).
  - 2. There are also several stories of "courtships," notably that of Isaac and Rebekah and Boaz and Ruth, both of which seem rather strange to us.
    - a. It was a servant who went "courting" for Isaac.
    - b. In the story of Boaz and Ruth, it was Ruth who did the "courting."
- B. What we can learn about courtship from the Bible we must learn from what it says about marriage.
  - 1. This is important, first, because it indicates that courtship (dating) is not a game, but that its only purpose is marriage.
  - 2. It is also important because one's view of marriage will determine one's view of courtship. E.g., the Bible does not sanction either divorce or remarriage after divorce - marriage, therefore, is permanent and that makes courtship also a very serious matter.

### Five Biblical Principles Concerning Marriage That Have Implications for Courtship.

#### I. **Marriage is Honourable.**

- A. The Principle:
  - 1. Both that marriage is good as an institution of God (Gen. 2:18).
  - 2. And also that marriage is the norm for most men and women.
    - a. There are exceptions - in some circumstances and for some people it is even better not to marry (cf. I Cor. 7:1, 7, 8, 25, 26, etc.).
    - b. Nevertheless the Bible says that forbidding people to marry or even suggesting that marriage is not good is a doctrine of devils (I Tim. 4:1-5).
- B. The Implications for Courtship:
  - 1. That is proper to want and to seek a wife or husband, and even for most what God commands (Prov. 18:22, I Cor. 7:2, 9).
  - 2. This in turn implies that all lawful means may be used to do so, including dating (properly understood and used) or courtship.

#### II. **Marriage is a Serious Matter.**

- A. The Principle:
  - 1. It is an institution of God Himself, not merely a matter of convenience or self-gratification (Gen. 2:21, 22, Matt. 19:6).
  - 2. It is designed to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:31, 32).
- B. The Implications for Courtship:
  - 1. That the only Biblically sanctioned purpose for dating or courting is that of seeking a husband or a wife from God - there is no Biblical warrant for "playing the field," seeking "conquests," mere flirtation, etc. Courtship is not a game.
  - 2. That the more clearly one sees the seriousness of marriage the more seriously one will take the matter of courtship.

#### III. **Marriage is a Work of God.**

- A. The Principle:
  - 1. Marriage is more than just something God has ordained.
  - 2. Matthew 19:6 implies that it is God who brings to each man his wife and to each

woman her husband, if He is pleased to do so.

**B. The Implications for Courtship:**

1. That courtship is not just a matter of a young man or woman finding a mate, but of seeking one from God
  - a. Here the stories of Isaac and Rebekah and of Boaz and Ruth have a very real application to our lives, though some of the circumstances may seem strange to us (cf. Gen. 24:2, 3, Ruth 3:10).
  - b. Those who seek a husband or wife from Him will be blessed - those who seek apart from Him will also find a mate without Him.
2. Above all that prayer is necessary (the essential ingredient in courtship).
  - a. Included here are individual prayer that God will give a godly husband or wife (or make it clear that it is His will that a person not marry).
  - b. Also (when a young man and woman have begun courting and know each other well enough to do so comfortably) that they pray together for God's guidance and help.

**IV. Marriage is In the Lord.**

**A. The Principle:**

1. It is wrong for a believer to marry an unbeliever (I Cor. 7:39b).
2. Those who marry contrary to this commandment do not even have any hope of the promise given in I Corinthians 7:16 and I Peter 3:1, 2.
3. Nor may we listen to lie that we can change someone by marrying them (either from unbelief or from sins to which they are given) - they have even less reason to change after marriage than before and seldom do.

**B. The Implications for Courtship:**

1. Most importantly, that it is also wrong to court or date an unbeliever (those who do should be warned and even disciplined by the church).
2. Also, that the time of courtship must be used to get to know one another in the Lord (find spiritual compatibility) that when the time for marriage comes it may very really be "in the Lord."
  - a. Spiritual "compatibility" is the third strand of a three-fold cord that is broken only with difficulty (Eccl. 4:12). The other strands are physical and "psychological" (everything else).
  - b. Without the spiritual the other two strands are strained to the breaking point (physical attraction and similar interests have never yet kept people together permanently).
3. This involves:
  - a. Praying together (see above).
  - b. Going to church together.
  - c. Between Christians from different backgrounds, talking about and settling differences (those not settled before marriage are seldom settled after).

**V. Sex Belongs in Marriage.**

**A. The Principle:**

1. The fact is clearly taught in Hebrews 13:4.
2. Outside of marriage, even that which entices another to sexual lust is forbidden (Gal. 5:19, Eph. 5:3, 4).

**B. The Implications for Courtship:**

1. There is some room for difference here, but all sexual contact is absolutely forbidden as well as anything that would arouse sexual lust.
2. Great care must be taken in courtship, also a couple who have come to love each

other and who intend to marry - they must be very careful that their love for one another does not draw them into sin.

- a. Courting couples must be careful about the hours they keep.
  - b. They must be careful about how often they see each other.
  - c. They must be careful how they spend their time together - not spending a lot of time alone together.
  - d. Long courtships should usually be avoided for the same reason.
3. To be drawn into these lusts and sins:
- a. Destroys the esteem a Christian couple should have for each other.
  - b. Destroys much of the joy and pleasure that sex has in marriage - once something is abused it is hard to enjoy it properly (as with wine).

#### Conclusion

- A. Not much has been said about love.
  1. Love is very important, too.
  2. But love must be founded on obedience to God and to God's Word for it to flourish and that obedience must begin before marriage.
- B. Founded on Scripture and the love of God:
  1. Married love will match the Word of God in the Song of Solomon 8:6, 7.
  2. Courtship will lead to that kind of love.

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