

The Beauty of Courtship

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Courtship. Oh how beautiful that word seems to a young man! Oh, that there would be another person, a close one, with whom to share joys and sorrows, to spend free time, to go to services with, and so on. But to some other youth, the word courtship can sound unpleasant. They would like it, but they haven't found a suitable companion.

Walking around the *opisto* grounds in the January cold, I noticed my friend from my dorm talking on the phone in front of the main entrance. I, barely a man and on the open market, of course wanted to be a part of the call. I went over and asked if I could talk for a while. My friend yielded.

I chatted for a long time with my dorm buddy's friend. Our thoughts seemed to fit well together. The conversation with a complete stranger was amazingly easy. The time passed quickly. We exchanged numbers and agreed to talk again the next day. From this beginning, grew a close communication.

I had had earlier experience with phone-based friendships. I told the girl, Victoria, many times that I could never start a courtship based on only getting to know each other over the phone. I told her how important I think it is for people to be able, for example, to sit together in services, to sing from the same songbook, to visit friends together while they are courting. Beginning a relationship was a frightening thing for me. The gentle line "not until you're of age" oft repeated at home had become fixed in my mind. Because Victoria and I lived far apart from each other, we couldn't see each other except by going to stay overnight. But I knew my parents' opinions on such matters, and so, in spite of our abundant contact, I didn't make any move towards courtship.

I met Victoria for the first time at Summer Services. We both feared that moment. I was afraid, that what if Victoria doesn't like my appearance or personality after all? What if I've given an entirely wrong impression of myself in our phone conversations? What if Victoria is entirely different from what I had inferred from her pictures? But what happened was quite the opposite. Our first meeting was warmhearted, and immediately there was a little flame of emotion in the air.

Summer Services were, nevertheless, soon over and gone. The summer continued with area services. In the fall, I visited Victoria's hometown, where we went to services and haps together. All this happened without my parents' knowledge. The first hints that my parents got of a girl's presence in my life came on the threshold of the New Year, when I asked for permission to visit Victoria's friend's family for the holiday. To my surprise, I was allowed to go. Upon my return home, I had news for my parents: Their possible future daughter-in-law would be coming to visit. Silence filled the kitchen. Still, in the end, my father told me that he and my mother had nothing against courting, as long as I had a believing girlfriend. My parents' reactions weren't nearly as stiff as I had imagined.

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At some point during courtship, the topic of where each one wants to live will certainly be discussed. For my own part, the situation is so funny that I will not be moving immediately to Victoria's hometown, nor she to mine. It's important to talk about your plans for the future while you are courting. But it's still good to remember that you don't need to decide everything immediately. Things will clarify in their own time.

For many youth, it can be difficult to face their boyfriend's, or girlfriend's parents. It's worth remembering that the other's parents are just as important to him or her as your own are to you. One needs to learn to respect them just like your own mother and father. If you think differently of some subjects than your friend's parents, it's better to remain quiet than to criticize.

Victoria's and my ways of thinking also differ to some degree, which is usually refreshing. It's nice to encounter new perspectives. Sometimes arguments arise from the differences in how we think. On these occasions, forgiveness has been our strength. We've put aside many quarrels, and in this way, we've been able to continue together towards the goal of courtship: marriage, and a shared future.

As courtship develops far enough, engagement will certainly come to mind. When would be a good time? For myself, that subject felt truly difficult for a long time. I had hinted to my parents of the possible engagement, but their reactions hadn't been very supportive. This fear haunted me almost until the end. I took the bull by its horns. I made an exception and asked my own father if he would have anything against my becoming engaged. After a moment of discussion, we realized that things have a tendency to fall into place; that God guides and aids. We came to the conclusion that if Victoria's father were to give permission, there would be no barriers to our engagement. And so, we are now happily engaged, and approach our wedding day with happy excitement.