

Christian Courtship

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord'. Pro 8:22

1. The Purpose of Courtship is to Lead to Marriage

These words from Proverbs show that the purpose of courtship is to find a spouse, and the sole intent of courtship is to that end. God ordained marriage saying, 'It is not good for man to be alone...' Gen. 2:18. With God's blessing a courtship leads, in the correct way, to marriage. God has given the gift of natural love, which belongs in marriage. Without love, marriage should not occur. A spouse is God's gift and we want to remember this as we consider courtship.

Congregation sing: Song 124

2. Seek A Believing Mate

Abraham wanted a christian wife for his son Isaac and helped him. God, our Father, helps and provides for us, too. A sin of the first world was marriage with unbelievers, Gen. 6:12. This is still a sin and will always be a sin, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' 2 Cor. 6:14. Sometimes it has been asked, "how do you know that this believer is not going to lead that unbeliever into the kingdom, when they are going together?" One is not lead by the light of the Holy Spirit through sin. One may repent, but that is a different matter. Consider the following true story.

A certain young believing man became engaged to an unbelieving girl. They decided to go to summer services together and to travel by train on which many believers were also riding. During the trip this unbelieving girl became involved in a conversation with several believers about matters of faith. After some discussion, this girl received the grace of repentance. As a finder of the treasure of faith and having become a child of God, she began to wonder if her fiancé was believing correctly himself in having become engaged to her, let alone 'having started a relationship with her. She walked up the train aisle to where he was sitting and told him of her repentance and spoke of breaking the engagement. She explained to him that she was concerned about his understanding of faith because he had become engaged to her as an unbeliever and that he couldn't have done that if his faith matters were correct. She felt that now as a believer it was best that she not remain engaged to him and intended to return the ring. More discussion ensued and the boy then comprehended his condition and repented. The brothers encouraged that the couple, correctly understanding the matter, now remain engaged to be married.

We understand from God's Kingdom that light hath no fellowship with darkness', 2 Cor. 2:14. When the marriage vows an engaged couple hears at their wedding are received with believing hearts, the couple certainly comprehends and rejoices in the of the unity of spirit through mutual faith.

Congregation sing: Song 125

If one has been recently converted, it has been understood in living christianity that they be allowed to grow in the grace and knowledge of God's Kingdom for a time, without courtship. Let it be for a while and if a relationship is to grow, God will show that in His time. If it is to happen, we don't need to force or hasten it on our own. The Apostle Peter

refers to the care of new converts in this way 'As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word. that ye may' grow thereby'. 1 Pet. 2:2

3 . Practical Considerations

'But if any provide not for his own...' 1 Tim. 5:8. Marriage brings with it many responsibilities, and one needs to be able to provide. The emotional and financial demands are very real and can at times be exceptionally heavy. It is important to be prepared for this. This includes among other things maturity, responsibility, some type of livelihood, and perhaps training and education. God certainly gives all things to us; but it is possible, through our own neglect, to bring on some of our own burdens. It is prudent and wise to plan with some degree of preparation.

4 . Conduct During Courtship

God's word teaches us that 'Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world', Titus 2:12. Two christians with interest in one another should get to know each other in the fellowship and shelter of the believers. Let's hear a short passage from the book The Patrician's Daughter (p. 70) as it describes a certain christian courtship. This is not a substitute for scripture but simply used to convey the christian viewpoint in a somewhat practical setting. (Reading) This describes how two young people got to know each other while visiting within a group of believers. Going off alone has it's obvious dangers, Pro 6:27 asks 'Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?'. Fornication, which is sexual relations before marriage, is sin; it is also very common in the world today. Statistics show greater and greater percentages of teens are becoming 'sexually active'. Alarmingly, the ages at which teens begin to be sexually active is dropping. Agencies, sometimes including schools, distribute information and devices so that teens can practice 'safe sex' and also avoid pregnancies. These disturbing facts and other similar phenomena clearly indicate the prevailing state of immorality in this present world. We see fulfillment of biblical prophecies concerning the wickedness of the last times. The Bible reminds us that these times shall be as in the days of Noah, Matt. 24:37, when exceedingly great immorality was openly witnessed. Believers cannot in any way accept such changing attitudes and permissiveness of sin and filth of the flesh, nor it's underlying corruption of the mind and heart. The Apostle Paul instructs, 'make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof', Rom. 13:12. The next song speaks of temptation, and in faith, battling against it.

Congregation sing: Song 121 v. 5-8

Only in marriage should an intimate physical relationship. expressly intended for man and wife, begin. Sexual activities of any kind not just intercourse, outside of marriage are sin; and such sin that the Bible clearly states that fornicators and adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of heaven, 1 Cor. 6:9., but rather will fall into perdition, where there shall be 'weeping and gnashing of teeth'. Adultery and fornication are what we refer to as 'sins unto death'. We do not equivocate or leave unclear our position on these kinds of matters, but simply state the understanding in christianity. Paul wrote to 'abstain from fornication', 1 Thes. 4:3. Of course, there is grace of forgiveness for these sins as there was for King David but sad to say, also as it was with David, sorrowful consequences may result. One is subject to all sorts of STD's, not to mention a multitude of other possible sorrows and afflictions. However, the greatest reason to abstain from any sin is

out of obedience to God's word and the desire to keep faith and a good conscience. Again we can see from the Patricians' Daughter (p. 79) the simple, clear way of faith in this matter. (Reading) Courting couples should avoid seclusion, as the temptations of the flesh are great and 'if you play with fire you're going to get burned'. Maintain the christian understanding and practice of 'hands off'. It is this way and we don't, for a moment, want to deceive ourselves or others: sexual activities prior to marriage are sin. God's kingdom is the 'pillar and ground of truth' 1 Tim. 3:5, and teaches this way through the Holy Spirit. We want to be obedient and rejoice in the wisdom, care, and instruction of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes to young Timothy about fleeing youthful lusts, and of keeping faith and a good conscience. This is very good and healthy instruction. If sin has wounded, God's grace washes sins away in the name and blood of Jesus. Song 114 reminds us of Jesus' great care for us.

Congregation sing: song 114, v. 3-7.

Courtship is a serious matter, and yet a joyful one. Enter prayerfully not playfully. Share the gospel and God's word as a courting couple, pray for one another and for the blessing of God and of His congregation. 'Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth' Eccl. 12:1.

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