

COURTSHIP

- I. Courtship and dating are not Biblical words. Some distinguish between courtship and dating.
- II. Cultural determinations of courtship process.
 - A. Hebrew society.
 1. Mate selection
 - a. Families usually arranged - Gen. 21:1; 38:6
 - b. Groom sometimes selected, and had family arrange - Judges 14:2
 - c. Family sometimes sought consent of daughter - Gen. 24:58
 - d. Romantic attraction in mate selection - Gen. 29:20
 2. Betrothal was as binding as marriage. Usually less than 1 year.
 3. *Mohar*. Marriage present from groom to bride's family. Compensation for loss of daughter. Gen. 34:12; Exod. 22:16; I Sam. 18:25
 - B. Roman society
 1. Mate selection usually arranged by families.
 2. Betrothal as early as ages 5-7 for daughters. Marriage - 12-17.
 3. Dowry. Bride's family pays husband's family or husband.
 - C. American society.
 1. Mate selection by romantic attraction, dating process.
 2. Adolescence. Early puberty and late marriage.
- III. A Christian courtship process.
 - A. Discern commonality of spirits.
 1. Is this person spiritually regenerated? John 3:1-6
 2. Take time to observe their values and attitudes. (Matt. 7:16)
 3. Will they pray with you? ...study Scripture? ...attend church?
 4. Seek counsel of pastor or spiritual leader.
 - B. Determine correlation of minds.
 1. Are there common interests?
 2. Do you share "the mind which is in Christ Jesus?" (Phil. 2:5)
 3. Is there common desire to "renew the mind?" (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23)
 - C. Discover concerns of emotions.
 1. Don't start with "feelings;" these should be by-product.
 2. Are your affections directed toward the highest well-being of the other person?
 3. Do you detect anger, fear, jealousy, pride, etc.?
 - D. Develop commitments of wills.
 1. Are there common objectives and priorities?
 2. Discuss short-range and long-range goals. Career choices.
 3. Is there a mutual decision to follow God's leading together?
 - E. Desire companionship of bodily presence.
 1. Desire to share recreation, entertainment, social occasions in each other's company.
 2. Communication; communication; communication!
 3. Premarital sexual relationships are contrary to God's intent. (I Cor. 6:12-20).

IV. Fundamental realities of Christian marriage.

- A. Conjunction of spirits within God's divine oneness.
(I Cor. 6:17; Malachi 2:15)
- B. Communications of minds within a context of considerate understanding.
(I Peter 3:7)
- C. Connection of emotions within a context of compassionate love. (Eph. 5:25)
- D. Commitment of wills within a mutual covenant relationship.
(Malachi 2:14)
- E. Consummation of bodies within a context of co-habitation. (I Cor. 7:3-5)

V. Learning to love.

- A. Love is NOT
 - 1. Something you "fall into" - a black hole.
 - 2. Infatuation. Emotional loss of control. "Flipped out.." "Couldn't help myself." Romanticism and sentimentalism. "Puppy love." Boy-crazy; girl-crazy.
 - 3. Evaluating another by external criteria. "She's a #10"
 - 4. Selfish. Interested in "getting" to satisfy my needs.
 - 5. Taking advantage of another (age, height, weight, looks, intellect, emotional maturity, spiritual maturity, social standings, social skills, psychological understanding, place of authority, financial superiority, etc.)
 - 6. Improper need fulfillment. Need for love, acceptance, relating, bonding, belonging, to be valued, affirmed, excitement, identity, etc.
 - 7. Lust. Hormones. Lasciviousness, sensuality. "Let's get physical."
 - 8. Sex. "Making love."
 - 9. Idolatry. ".....is my life." Totally preoccupied in attention and time.
- B. Love is...
 - 1. Respectful of the other person's values, standards and opinions.
 - 2. Unselfish and unconditional.
 - 3. A decision to relate to the other person at every level - spiritual, psychological and physical.
 - 4. Giving of oneself to the other.
 - 5. Responsible to seek the highest good of the other person "for better or for worse."
 - 6. God in action. (Rom. 5:5; I John 4:8,16)

VI. Physical limitations in courtship.

- A. Sexual intercourse is sin outside of context of marriage.
(I Cor. 6:9; 17,18; II Tim. 2:22).
- B. Sublimation or suppression of temporal gratification for long-term benefit.
- C. Mutual determination of limits made before God. Love will not seek to go beyond.