

## Dating & Courtship

Dating as the world practises it is a recent innovation. It is neither clearly a courtship process leading to marriage, nor is it open, brazen immorality, but is a kind of blend of the two.

Thus it dishonours marriage as God designed it.

- \* It teaches people that one can take the privileges of marriage without assuming the responsibilities.
- \* It opens the door to sexual impurity before marriage.
- \* It bypasses parental and spiritual authority.

If two people commit fornication before marriage this does not mean they are married. Two people living together are not married, they are in fornication. Sex does not create a marriage, it only creates an obligation (Exodus 22:16-17). A marriage is two people making a covenant before God and man. Sex consummates a covenant, but it does not create it.

How should Christians approach dating and courtship? Essentially, dating or courting is to be *a friendship relationship which aims at marriage*. Five principles should guide us here:

- 1) *You are ready to date when you are ready to marry.* I Timothy 5:8 tells a man it is his responsibility to provide for his own. If a man is not in a position to do that, he should not be in a marriage-type relationship. Rather delay the courtship till you have finished college, or in some cases, get a job, get married and study part time.
- 2) *Get the counsel, guidance and permission of your parents and spiritual authorities* (Numbers 30) Parents should be involved in the process. Their counsel should be heeded except if they are perverse and are advocating unbiblical things. Involve your pastors where your own parents do not have the spiritual insight or maturity to guide you.
- 3) *Conduct a non-physical, non-romantic friendship relationship for the purposes of evaluating the other person.* You cannot be 'evaluating' someone if you have already entered into a physical and romantic relationship with them. Your goal is to see if you can be companions to one another.
- 4) *When you have 'green lights' from Scripture and your authorities, and there is mutual desire, make the approach to marriage.* Here is where you must be especially cautious to avoid making provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Guard against all sexual temptation.
- 5) *Take engagement seriously, and keep it short.* Engagement is not the same as the betrothal period of the ancient Israelites, but it is to be taken seriously. If you are engaged, it is because you are certain this person is for you. In that case, your engagement should not take any longer than it takes to plan a wedding.
- 6) *Get premarital counselling from the church.* Don't be the sort of person who comes to the church at the last minute for a wedding, having neglected to ask for counsel all along.