

Courtship 1 Cor. 7.7-9

- Why this subject? Aside from salvation, *the* most important decision. Get it *wrong* = spiritual **disaster**. Get it *right* = great spiritual **blessing**.
- Marriage is honourable (great **value**) in the sight of God (Heb. 13.4), **but** it is *not for everyone*.
- Paul: Being single or unmarried is *preferable*. (vv. 7-8). Being single is not failure or second best.
- Each has his own *gift from God* (v.7). *God gives the gift of being single (remaining unmarried) to some, whereas He definitely calls others to the gift of the married state. It is an individual matter.*
- God gives (grace) the necessary ability and capacity to serve Him in whichever sphere we are.
- Unmarried: Jeremiah. Told not to marry (16.2). Had to sacrifice having children. His calling required it.
- Married: Philip the evangelist. Itinerant evangelist (Acts 8). In Caesarea, married, 4 daughters (25 years later).

Purpose of Courtship

- Definition: *A period during which a couple develop a romantic relationship before getting married.*
- Courtship is not dating. *Dating for fun* has no place (world). Not *trying out* prospective partners.
- Courtship is with a view to marriage. **JA Davidson**: *Courtship is getting acquainted. People with serious intentions of linking themselves together for a lifetime need to spend time in each other's company, to talk together, to be happy together, to know one another's ambitions, objectives and priorities. So, do not form attachments lightly.*

Preparing for Courtship Gen. 2.20-22; 24.12-14

- **Prayer. Gen. 2.22**: (God) made... (Adam) a woman, and brought her unto the man. This is **God's work**. He brings man and woman together – pray! Abraham's servant prayed for a sign *before* Rebekah appeared (Gen. 24.12-14).
- Because he was *in the right way*, the Lord led him (v.27). Are we in a right/close relationship with Him?
- Don't look around for a... look **UP**. **Pray God will preserve you from the wrong person before you meet them.**
- **Patience**. Resist the pressure to pair up and flirt. Place yourself in His hands; His purpose cannot be thwarted. He will never give *second best*. *Better to be single than to wish you were!*
- **Persistence. Prov. 18.22**: *Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good (beautiful) thing.* 'Findeth' – implies a quest. To *pursue* after and *finally* catch or *acquire* the sought after object! Some effort may be required!
- **Hunt** in the right places! *Spend time in the company of Christians. If you have asked the Lord to bring the right partner into your life, you can hardly expect to find them in a place where the Lord is not honoured.*

Principles of courtship 2 Cor. 6.14; 1 Cor. 7.39

- **Prohibitions: NOT** an **unbeliever** (2 Co. 6.14). But they're sympathetic, spiritual... they might get saved? NO!
- E.g. Samson. Early spiritual promise not realised. He *looked* (beware the *second* look), *talked* and *took* (Jud. 14).
- **NOT any believer!** 'In the Lord' (1 Co. 7.39). To bow and submit to His authority (Lordship) – His *word* and *will*. There must be spiritual unity (doctrine/practice). P & Aquila: 'Laid down their own **necks** (singular)', Rom. 16.4.
- Rebekah and Isaac were spiritually suited – *people of the well*. Enjoyed/valued refreshment of the word of God.
- **Person**: *Don't just go for face and figure; go for faith and fidelity. But if you get all four, jump at the chance!!*
- Gen. 24: Abraham had given the *guidelines* (land, family). The servant tests for **character** – water for camels. Not looking for a *princess*, but *kindness, compassion, diligence*. 10 camels = 100 trips to the well, hours of work.
- What character? Fruit of the Spirit. **Prov. 31**: Good name (reputation); trustworthy; God-fearing; wise; caring.
- **Prudence**: Once the Lord has clearly guided, proceed with *caution*. **Private** (at first) and *discreet* (the opposite of brash and bold; self-controlled, sensible, Tit. 2.5). Do not text with *emojis* or broadcast *online*! **Polite** (parents).
- Discuss vital matters. *Children? How many? Missionary? Commitment? Hospitality? Spiritual goals and desires.*
- Do not *rush* matters. Take your time over *courtship* and *engagement* (12 months). **Courage** to 'break it off'.
- **Purity**: In *attitude, appearance* and *actions*. Younger sisters are to be treated with all purity (1 Tim. 5.2). Purity = inward thought and outward action. No teasing of emotions, but great respect. *Temple* of Holy Spirit.
- *There is a vast difference between showing affection and inciting passion.* 'Hands off' is wise and safe.
- **Perseverance**: Even a marriage made in heaven (Isaac & Rebekah) had its problems. *Learn to love* (Tit. 2.4).

Pattern of Courtship 2 Cor. 11.2-3

- *Isaac & Rebekah* (Gen. 24); *Boaz & Ruth* (admiring her diligence, dignity and devotion to Naomi).
- *Song of Solomon* (great mutual respect in their occupation with one another. He is the *apple tree* = shelter and protection. She is the *rose of Sharon* = tenderness, beauty and fragrance).
- *Christ and the Church* (Eph. 5). He saw value in her and loved her. He demonstrated His self-sacrificial love by giving Himself for her. Her heart was drawn out in affection to Him. Now they are betrothed (2000 years)!
- Espoused to *one Husband*. There must be *total devotion, loyalty* and *separation* to Him (2 Cor. 11).