

Romance, Courtship, And Dating

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Preface

One of the most confusing issues that face Christian young people today is understanding what the Bible teaches about romance. While we know that the precious Word of God is unchanging, the world in which we live is so morally dark—changing and lowering its moral standards so often—that the whole area of God honoring standards of conduct when two Christians fall in love can be quite difficult to discern.

Of course the world has no lack of its own standards—the most of which are thoroughly godless and often patterned after the decadent life-styles of popular entertainers, professional athletes or those prominent in other areas of society. Morality, or rather the complete lack of it, in the world in which we live provides no standards at all. Man’s morals are built on the shifting sands of public opinion rather than the unchanging rock of the Bible. Because of this, the sphere of human love and romance has become one of the most stark examples of the sorrow and corruption resulting from a spirit similar to that found in the book of Judges: “*but every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Jud. 21:25).

Today romantic love (at least what the world considers love) has become the motivator and justifier for the allowance of every kind of corrupt and abominable conduct and unrestrained lust.

Because this is so, without the wonderful light—Divine and unchanging—of the precious Word of God, the outlook for a Christian couple seeking to fully enjoy the excitement and wonder of romance in a way that not only gives deep pleasure, but glorifies God, would be bleak indeed. But it is God who created the human heart and affections, who said “*It is not good that the man should be alone*”, who provided in Eve a meet companion to fill and satisfy Adam’s heart. Thus we may be sure that while our loving God and His standards have never changed (nor will they ever change), we may confidently open His Word assured that it contains all the divine guidance and instruction needed for every aspect and detail of the wonderful and exciting world of romance, courtship and dating.

Introduction

First Things First

Before we begin, its very important to understand what we mean by the terms “romance”, “courtship”, and “dating”. In North American culture these words are often used interchangeably. But this can cause confusion for they have quite different meanings depending on the person (or society) who uses them. The questions Christians need to determine are *if* and *how* God uses them in His Word.

First of all we will notice that *none* of these three words is found in the *King James Bible* or in Mr. Darby’s *New Translation* of the Bible. But this is not necessarily significant. For example, we have often heard that the word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, though what it refers to is a fundamental and essential Christian doctrine found throughout New Testament Scriptures.

So while we may not find these three words in the Bible, what they refer to is also found throughout its divinely inspired pages.

What Do They Mean?

Romance is simply the wonderful relationship that takes place between a man and a woman whose hearts have been attracted to each other. Perhaps the book in the Word of God which best describes a godly *romantic relationship* is The Song of Solomon.

Remember too that *romance* should never end after marriage begins! The romantic love that blossomed before marriage ought to develop and grow all during that union. “*Rejoice with the wife of thy youth...be thou always ravished with her love*” (Prov. 5:18,19). “*Husbands love your wives*” (Eph. 5:25, Col. 3:19).

Courtship is a formal term used in English speaking lands which describes the actions that take place in a *romantic relationship*. A striking example of *courtship* is seen in Gen. 29:18-20. Jacob *loved* (romance) Rachel and agreed to serve her father Laban for *seven years* (courtship) to have her as his wife. We don’t think of *courting* in our Western society as work—but that was what it meant in the culture in which Jacob and Rachel lived!

Dating is really just another, more commonly used word for courtship. We might also say that *going on a date* is *one* of the activities of a courtship. Too, we often say that when a man and

woman are attracted to each other and begin to “court”, they are “dating” or “going steady”.

A Note Of Caution

Though all three terms are used in this booklet here’s a word of caution about *dating*. If you think of dating only as a casual, recreational activity that normal young people “just do” to have fun—doing so with several or many different partners before getting *serious*—you are doing something that has **no Scriptural sanction**. I do not feel that there are principles in the Word of God that encourage or give guidance for this kind of “recreational” or “casual” dating. Dating properly comes *after* there has been prayer seeking the Lord’s guidance for a life’s companion, and receiving an answer to your prayers in finding your heart attracted to another. It is a joyous *and* serious thing to do.

We read in Proverbs 4:23, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*”. The heart is very tender and easily wounded. What one may be intend as nothing more than a “casual date” may be a very serious thing to the other. Broken, crushed hearts bring solemn and tragic results. Be very careful with another’s heart and affections, for God loves each of His dear children and will not look lightly on someone who fools around with another’s affections!

Unequal Yokes.

What follows in this booklet concerning romantic relationships between two young people is presented with the assumption that both partners are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian becoming romantically involved with an unbeliever is absolutely and always wrong. Our loving Father who delights to bless asks this heart-searching question: “*Can two walk together except they be agreed?*” (*Amos 3:3*). Then in 2 Corinthians 6:14 He gives this solemn, unalterable command to His dear children: “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers*”. Beloved young person! if you really want a happy life and marriage, be obedient to Him.

Now there may be those reading this who, through ignorance, self will, or poor teaching, are presently in a romantic “unequal yoke” with an unbeliever. While the Word of God is fully able to address every condition of our lives, we must, in faithfulness to Him

say that such a relationship is not *normal* Christianity, nor is it the result of being led by the Spirit of God. We entreat any presently in such a relationship to flee to Lord in brokenness of heart and with a contrite spirit (Psa. 34:18). There you will find wisdom as well as *mercy and grace to help in time of need* (Heb. 4:16).

A Loving Warning

I would also lovingly warn our beloved young people to be very careful before committing to a relationship with one who makes a quick profession of *being saved* or of *knowing God* or of *going to church*, or such like things. When the heart's affections become involved with another, it is very easy to say *the right things*—the things that the partner may want to hear. An unsaved person, may for the sake of winning another's heart and seeking to please and make them happy, give outward evidence of being a Christian. And for one who is a Christian and is being pursued by another, such *good words and fair speeches* can easily fool the heart if the believer is not fully trusting in the Lord.

In Luke 13:25, the Lord Jesus spoke of those who called unto Him saying “Lord, Lord”, but His solemn answer to them was, “*depart from me for I never knew you*”. Dear young believer, I plead with you to remember that many speak about God, church and the Bible—may even say they are *saved* or *born again* or some such acceptable sounding words. Yet, they may not have real life from Christ at all. It is easy to *talk and act religious* but impossible to *live Christ* unless a real believer.

The only safety from the heartache that is sure to come from such a solemn situation is to be cast upon the blessed Lord Jesus in humble submission and dependence upon His perfect wisdom. Remember, “*he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool* (Prov. 28:26).

May the Lord give each young person purpose of heart to bow before His precious Word rather than to give in to the tendencies and desires of their heart. A happy courtship and marriage depends upon reality with God and submission of heart from *both partners*. “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*” (Jn. 13:17).

The Wonderful World of Courtship

We are assured in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. . .*”. In Proverbs 4:1 we read, “*Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding*”. Psalms 119:10,11 shows the desire and interest with which we are to read the Word of God. “*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*”.

Though finding and dating that “special person” is an exciting and wonderful time, apart from obedience and submission to the precious Word of God, there are real dangers of falling into sin that dishonors the Lord Jesus—sins which may cause tragic shipwreck in the lives of young believers. Because of this it is vital to find those moral principles in the Bible which apply to romantic relationships. Because every word of God *is pure, quick* (living), and *powerful*, the Spirit is able to bring from every part of them principles which bear on the individual, unique circumstances of each dear young person.

Let’s turn to the very first chapter in the Bible where I believe that the account of creation contains a rich treasure chest of moral principles which can give divine guidance to those who are entering that beautiful and exciting world of courtship. Courtship is not an *end* in itself—it is but the happy means by which two people are brought into the wonderful relationship of marriage.

God has created the institution of marriage for the enjoyment and blessing of man (and as a beautiful picture of Christ and the church). He has also given instructions and principles intended to guide those who inhabit this wonderful world and the world which leads to it, courtship. These principles are to insure that we might enjoy, in the greatest measure possible, all that God desires for our happiness and blessing (see Gen. 1:22, 2:18, and 5:2).

Day 1—The Beginning

V 1 “In the beginning, God”

There is no better principle than this for giving guidance for all that takes place in a romance. Perhaps you wonder whether the feelings you find in your heart for another are really okay—you wonder “is this really the right one?” You might be wondering “how

will I know when the right person comes along?” Or maybe you’re concerned about how to let that special person know that you’re interested in them. How do you go about getting to know them? You may be uncertain about where to go on that *first date*. All these are very important questions! The answer to them begins, beloved young person with remembering that “*In the beginning God*”. Make Him—His thoughts, His Word—the starting point for your every action.

“*O God. . . early will I seek thee*” (Psa. 63:1).

A Proper Balance

V I “ . . . created the heavens and the earth”

A courtship needs a proper balance between the spiritual (“heavens”) and the natural (“earth”). A courtship which leads to marriage is of God, but given to enjoy in nature—in this life. Marriage is not a *spiritual* condition but a natural joy. “*In the resurrection they...neither marry nor are given in marriage*” (Matt. 22:30). Though for this earth, courtship and marriage are to be guided by heavenly principles. “*I will guide thee with mine eye*” (Psa. 32:8).

A couple may decide to go on a date riding bikes and enjoying a picnic. That is *nature*—appropriate joys for this earth. However what they wear on that bike ride and how they act towards each other when alone is to be guided by *heaven*. Both aspects—heaven and earth—must be given their appropriate place in a romance. A courtship characterized only by heaven is as spiritually unrealistic as a courtship characterized only by earth is morally dangerous.

Stable, Anxiety-Free Courtship

Just as there was a proper order and progression in God’s creation of the physical world, so there should be an orderly, stable development in a romance. “*God is not the author of confusion*”—not in His creation of the universe, and not in the divine principles which He gives to guide a courtship.

So often, the “on again—off again” romances typical of western society are filled with more problems, contentions, and strife, than joy. Christian courtship isn’t to be like some cheap soap opera. The principles God gives, if followed by two believers in their romance, will bring joy, growing love, confidence, and stability.

If a young person whose heart is attracted to another is uncer-

tain as to whether those feelings are mutually shared by that special person a lot of distress will result. How much anxiety and unhappiness is caused by a lack of confidence in the affections or intentions of the partner in a courtship!

Keep the spirit of worldly romances tainted by flirting, jealousy, uncertainty and unfaithfulness out of your courtship. “*Come out from among them and be separate*” (2 Cor. 6:17). Such godless and defiling actions as practiced in worldly relationships have no part in the beautiful fabric that comprises a true Christian romance.

Confusion, Mistakes, And Sin

V 2 “*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*”

Have you felt this way when wondering about another one for whom you have growing affections? Perhaps you wonder, “Are they really the right person for me?” “Is that guy/girl God’s choice for me for my life’s companion?” So many questions filling your heart filled with confusion and darkness concerning your feelings for another individual, or their’s for you.

Maybe you’ve been involved in a courtship and then, for some reason, the whole thing seemed to fall apart, almost without warning. Now you’re hurting. The relationship ended in disaster and heart break and all appears dark and hopeless. It seems impossible that you will ever be happy again. Worse yet, perhaps moral sin has been allowed in that relationship. What at one moment seemed so beautiful, so right, has only led to sorrow, guilt, and devastation.

With everything so dark and formless things may seem hopeless as you ask yourself “After making a mess like that, how can I expect God to bring the right one for my life to me?” Remember this beloved young person, God is the “*God of hope*” (Rom. 15:13). In Jeremiah 32:27 the Lord asks “*Is there anything too hard for me?*” God is the God of the *second chance*!

Light And Hope

We do not know what took place to mar the original, perfect creation, but it came into total ruin. Yet God did not allow His creation to remain in that empty, dark condition (*waste and empty*—JND trans.). Nor does God want your heart and life to remain in an

empty, void condition. “*He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds*” (Psa. 147:3). He lovingly tells us that “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 Jn. 1:9). And He assures us that He will not despise a “*broken and contrite heart*” (Psa. 51:17).

There is no need to despair of His blessing in your life, beloved young person. But there is a great need to draw near and hear Him, knowing that He is pure love and that He always receives with open arms returning children who come back in a repentant, humble, and contrite spirit (Psa. 34:18, Psa. 51, Prov. 28:13, Luke 15:11-32).

If there is confession and repentance, you may be assured that our gracious God will give you an *answer of peace* (Gen 41:16) concerning a life’s companion. Do trust Him!

You Can Start Over

V 2 “*And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*”

Water in Scripture often suggests instability and confusion (Luke 21:25). Maybe that is just how you feel right now about the effects of a former romance or your uncertainty about beginning one. All may seem dark, unformed, and waste, but remember that God is personally, intensely interested in you. So interested that He knows the very number of the hairs of your head (Luke 12:7). Just as His Spirit moved with divine interest over that desolate scene in Genesis, so He does today concerning the conditions of your heart and life.

In a better translation (J.N.D.), the Spirit of God is recorded as “hovering” or “brooding” over the scene of desolation. Why didn’t God just give up, destroy the whole creation and then start all over? Because that’s not the heart of our wonderful, loving God! He delights to take up ruined conditions and make them beautiful! “*I will bind up that which was broken and strengthen that which was sick*” (Ezk. 34:16).

If sin and disobedience has marked your courtship, repent and confess it to your Father. If there is confusion and darkness in your life about romance, trust and submit in faith to your Father. None can do better for you than He will do! “*I will trust in thee*” (Psa. 56:3).

Light For A New Beginning

V 3–5 “*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And*

God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”

Notice, it is God who acts. He who is Light (1 John 1:5) says, “*Let there be light*”. *Light* is the first thing that must characterize a courtship between two Christians—*moral light*. Because it is God who has said “*Let there be light*” this is a nonnegotiable issue for those who desire a happy, exciting and fulfilling romance. “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8).

Don’t get caught up in the wicked spirit of this world which makes heroes out of those whose lives are filled with corruption and filth—*morality* which God calls *abomination*. Such wickedness is no pattern for a godly romance for it is of the darkness, not the light.

As you find yourself beginning to seriously date another believer always remember that your Father wants your courtship to be characterized by light. We read that “*God saw the light that it was good*”. He is watching (with a tender, loving Father’s eye) over all that takes place in your romance. Don’t allow any actions in your courtship which cannot stand the full light of His loving presence. “*Thou God seest me*” (Gen. 16:13).

There Is No “Half-Light”

God is the only One who has the right to make a clear and distinct difference between light and darkness. He has called the light “*day*” and the darkness “*night*”. He also morally separates between what is good (light) and what is (sin) darkness. God is infinite and sovereign, setting the standards for right and wrong in your courtship. Remember that in dating (as in all other things), God has no half-light called, “*It’s OK to do this, because we love each other*”.

Keep the light and the darkness clearly divided in your romance. That is the *first day*—the wonderful and exciting beginning of a Christian courtship. You will find that the Word of God clearly identifies that which answers to moral light and moral darkness. Read it prayerfully and carefully!

The present world has so lost the fear of God that it will try to convince you when dating that any kind of conduct is acceptable. Anything that feels good is acceptable—and is encouraged—in the

world's romantic relationships. In fact, our so called Christian lands even have certain laws of morality based on the godless concept of "consenting adults". All this means is that what God calls sin is considered acceptable behavior between those who consent to such conduct!

All this is such sad folly! Our God has set the standards of day (right) and night (wrong) in romantic relationships between two people. He has clearly separated the day from the night. Do not allow the world's lack of Godly moral standards and tolerance of evil to blur the clear distinctions He has made for conduct in courtship.

Finally, don't be fooled! A Christian can't use the world's twisted standards of conduct for guiding a romance. The Lord Jesus said, "*Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*" (Matt. 15:14).

Day 2—Romance Does Not Work in Water

V 6–8 "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."

Water has no shape and no strength. It conforms to the shape of the vessel in which it is contained. Without those constraining walls, water would be become an shapeless puddle. Who wants a courtship that has no shape or strength to it? Serious commitments are necessary to create and sustain a serious relationship.

A lifetime commitment between two people will not last if it has no ability to stand in its own strength. The world encourages and tolerates many kinds of sinful conduct as being acceptable for two who are "in love". Most of these standards very soon lead young people into the sin of immorality. Never allow your courtship to be formed by the world's thoughts for that is like trying to build a courtship on water. "*Be not conformed to this world.*" (Rom. 12:2).

Just What Is The Firmament?

In order to prepare a suitable, stable place for the earth, God created a *firmament* called heaven—it separated the unstable waters

below and above. As a young person senses developing feelings in their heart for another many questions will present themselves. For instance, “How do I really know if he or she is the right one for me?” “Does the one I have feelings for, have the same for me?” “Are we compatible in interests and desires to follow the Lord?”

What you need beloved young person is a *firmament* to separate from the *waters* of confused thoughts and ideas—something that will bring clearness and stability to the heart. The firmament which does this in a young person’s life must be called heaven, for man’s wisdom and morals can never provide answers to your questions or stability for a happy Christian courtship.

How vital that a young believer rest on the unchanging *heavenly wisdom* found in God’s Word. There—not the shifting sands of man’s opinions—is where lasting stability in romance is to be found.

“*My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding*” (Prov. 5:1). “*Cease from thine own wisdom*” (Prov. 23:4).

Day 3—Building On A Foundation of Faith

V 9–10 “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.”

You cannot build anything using water as a foundation—certainly not a lasting, happy courtship. In creation, in order for there to be a world with grass and trees and animals and man, God first created dry ground. The dry land provided the foundation needed to support all that God would place in His beautiful creation.

Super Market Dating

In today’s world it’s considered acceptable to *date around*, have fun, and not get serious about just one guy or girl—just like going to a super market to buy a box of cereal. There are so many different choices that if you find you don’t like the taste of one, you can try another! This is exactly man’s idea of how to find a life’s companion. “Shop around” before you get married is the world’s counsel. The more guys (girls) you date, the easier it will be to know when you have found the “right one”. Such reasoning is very foolish—just like trying to build a house on water rather than on firm dry earth.

What Is Dry Ground?

In moral application, *dry ground* is **faith in** and **obedience to** the precious Word of God. The Bible is solid, unchangeable and the *only* safe place on which to base your life and the decisions you make. “*my words shall not pass away*” (Luke 21:33). A solid foundation on which to build a beautiful, lifetime relationship with another can only be built safely on the dry ground of the unchanging Word of God.

Faith trusts God alone to provide wisdom and guidance for your courtship. “*Without faith it is impossible to please Him*” (Heb. 11:6). Obedience is the natural effect of faith in God and love for the Lord Jesus. “*If ye love me, keep my commandments*” (Jn. 14:15).

Faith is increased, strengthened and guided by daily prayer and reading the Bible. “*That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*” (1 Cor. 2:5). Are you questioning if you have enough faith? Read Luke 17 beginning with verse 5 (where the disciples asked the Lord to increase their faith).

Don't Make A Muddy Mess?

Dry land loses its character when mixed with water. The moment water is added to it, mud results. It is just as impossible to build a lasting foundation on mud as it is to build it on water. Do not try to mix the holy divine standards of God's Word (dry ground) with the filthy, defiled standards of the world (water). You'll just end up with a muddy mess! The two can't mix any better or with any better results than trying to put “*new wine into old bottles*” (Matt. 9:17).

Don't try to attach your definitions to what God has already named “dry land” and “water”. His thoughts are infinitely higher than yours (Isa. 55:8,9). Sometimes, when believers get caught up in the spirit of the world, they are tempted to modernize or give a different name to God's principles. For instance, the world calls an unmarried man and woman who live together “cohabiting” or having a “significant other” or making a “commitment of love”.

But God calls having sex outside of marriage sin—fornication.

Trying to mix the world's moral standards of romance with God's holy, pure standards brings disaster. Be very careful of creating moral mud in your courtship! And remember that what God creates and names is good. Changing His standards to conform to the world's will only get you in a “sticky mess”! “*What fellowship hath*

righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14).

Courtship Needs Grass

V 11–13 “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.”

The dry ground of faith in God and His Word regarding Christian relationships in dating yields peaceful, enjoyable results. But if you follow the world’s thoughts about romance and morality your relationship will not be able to produce *grass*.

When a courtship is established by faith, there are three wonderful things which will develop (grow) from it: (1) grass, (2) herbs yielding seed, and (3) fruit trees yielding fruit. These three will morally appear in this same order in a Godly Christian courtship.

Two believers who are in a dating relationship should first make sure it is producing “grass”. In Psalm 23 we learn that grass brings *rest* and *peace*. In Mark 6:39, before the Lord Jesus feeds the multitude, He gives them a place of *rest* on the green grass.

Beloved young people, see to it that your dating and courtship is characterized from the very beginning by *peace* and *rest*. “*Let the peace of God rule*” (Col. 3:15). How quickly a Christian romance can be ruined when one partner pushes the other to go beyond his or her conscience when expressing affections. No grass can grow (no rest or peace will be found) in a relationship where there is constant anxiety because of the unseemly actions of one towards the other.

Who Plants The Grass First?

Scripture teaches us that the man is the one who is to initiate a courtship. We have the perfect, divine example of this in Ephesians 5:25; “*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*”. Another has pointed out that “love, in the right sense, begins in the heart of the man, and then he courts the girl he loves.”

Let’s consider the story of Ruth. Her heart, as well as that of her mother-in-law, Naomi, obviously desired that Boaz would take

notice of her and would want her for his wife. Yet when Ruth seems unsure of how to approach Boaz, Naomi wisely tells her to “*Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day*” (Ruth 3:18). You see, it was Boaz’ responsibility as the man to initiate a courtship with Ruth as a result of the love he felt for her. Ruth, as Naomi pointed out, would have been out of place to try to initiate a relationship with Boaz (We might note here, that perhaps that was what happened in Moab. Maybe the women in that land did initiate romantic relationships with men ... but it was not of God).

Don’t Burn The Grass

Beloved young person be careful about starting the fires of passion in your courtship. Once started they can quickly explode into an uncontrollable fire storm of lust that will quickly and tragically destroy the joy and happiness God intends for you.

In 1 Corinthians 7 the apostle Paul answers questions that new Christians, who were used to immoral life-styles (such as are common in North America today) before they were saved, had asked concerning romance and marriage. His first comment is, “*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*” (1 Cor. 7:1). That may seem very restrictive. But the thought (which is much more clear in the original Greek) is that a man is not to touch a woman in a way that will “*light a fire of passion*”. In 1 Timothy 5:22, Paul told the young man, Timothy, “Keep thyself pure.” How vital that both partners in a Christian courtship see to it that physical contact in their romance is maintained in God honoring purity.

A great danger for young Christians today is becoming hardened to immorality and impurity of this present world. Most of Western society—especially in the areas of marketing, sports and entertainment—is based on explicit sensuality and sexually immoral themes. If you get caught up in that spirit beloved young Christian, it will quickly lower the purity in which you ought to, as a child of God, carry on your courtship.

There is a great difference between enjoying a “grassy courtship”, and experiencing one that’s been destroyed by the fires of unrestrained passion. “*Flee fornication*” (1 Cor. 6:18).

Providing Grass For The Young Woman

A young man who continually pushes his girlfriend towards a physical familiarity with which she is not comfortable is destroying the very first thing that ought to be found on the dry ground of a Christian courtship—grass. Such conduct on the part of the young man, shows a lack of respect for a sister in Christ as *a weaker vessel* (1 Pet. 3:7), and a lack of purity (see 1 Jn. 3:3). No romance can be peaceful and restful if the girl has to be constantly on guard against the physical advances of her boyfriend. Apply this truth—“*Let the peace of God rule*”—in all your dating activities.

What fun is there for your girlfriend, if, as she gets ready for a Friday night date with you, her heart is filled with worry about how far you might try to physically push her this time? How do you expect her to confidently entrust herself for life to you as your wife if she can't even trust herself in your company for a few hours on a date?

Brothers, *learn to be men*—real men of God! Develop a care, a thoughtfulness and a concern for the feelings of the sister you are dating. Even more—be concerned about what the Lord Jesus thinks of your actions toward your girl friend. When you begin to date a young sister, you begin to handle one of the most fragile and delicate things found in all creation—a human heart. Do not trifle with the heart and the affections of a child of God!

Who Comes First?

Not you, young man! Nor your feelings, thoughts and desires. God and His thoughts come first, then your girl friend's feelings, and then yours. See to it brothers that your desires are always formed and guarded by the Word of God and that you do not selfishly push to *have your own way* in your courtship.

By acting as a man of God, fully submitted to and controlled by His thoughts, your companion will develop a growing confidence in you, learning that you can be trusted in your actions and judgment as you are dating. May you not allow lust and passion to destroy the grass!

Who's Responsible?

You are the man. Headship is your responsibility. “*And the head of the woman is the man*” (1 Cor. 11:3). God expects you to take the responsibility and lead in your courtship, just as you will someday do as

head of your home. “*Quit (“act”) you like men*” (1 Cor. 16:13).

Do you think, dear young brother, that our loving Father’s answer to the earnest prayer of a sister for a Godly, responsible life’s companion would be to give her someone whom she cannot trust, who wants only to have a “good time”, and who has no interest in acting in purity in a romance?

We sometimes tease about how a father feels when his daughter goes out on her first date. Think for a moment how much more God is concerned about that young lady—His blood bought child—that you are taking out on a date! Again we say, be *prayerful* and *careful*.

Lust and Nature

Dear young brother, you will specially have to deal moment by moment with the “lusts of the flesh” which is the working of the “old man”. Remember there is a great difference between the lust which our flesh produces, and the feelings of tender love and joy produced in the heart, for that special person. Further, physical intimacy that is perfectly normal and encouraged by our God in the marriage union, is totally unacceptable—is indeed sin—in a courtship.

Sin—that which produces wicked desires and lusts in us that are contrary to God—has already been dealt with at the cross (Gal. 2:20). Now we are to live our lives in the reality of what God has done with our wicked old nature. Daily we should “*Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin*” (Rom. 6:11). Remember that the flesh cannot be trusted. Seek God’s grace to keep your courtship morally pure at all times.

We are never told that we are *dead to nature*. Courtship and marriage is part of the wonderful realm of nature that God has given man for his enjoyment and delight. There’s nothing wrong with the feelings of excitement and attraction you have for your girlfriend—it would be quite strange if you didn’t have them. But *how you express those feelings* must always be guided by standards set in the Bible—never expressed according to the lusts of the flesh.

If your courtship is of God and you want it to be happy, exciting, and joyful, as He intends it to be, make sure that you are diligently growing the *grass* of peace and rest in your romance!

Providing Grass For The Young Man

Dear sisters, how much grass (peace and rest) can you grow in a courtship if your dress is immodest and revealing and your conduct is a “come on”—a constant temptation to your boyfriend to initiate actions which go beyond the limits of modesty and physical purity?

Flirting and sexual teasing is not a harmless sport, nor is it your place to chase or tease a young man in this manner. Proverbs 7 gives a solemn example of a woman who chases after a young man and catches him. God’s Word calls this woman a harlot and the result of her actions causes the moral death of the young man!

The world encourages a woman to take the lead—to make the first move—with a young man. You are taught by this world that your body is nothing more than an object to excite man’s lust—how degrading! A godly Christian woman is not characterized by such things. You are to display, not your body, but *a meek and quiet spirit* (1 Pet. 3:4). The story of Rebekah in Genesis 24 is a good example of the modesty that ought to characterize each dear young sister.

Of course, Christian girls have the flesh too. Dear young sister, you are capable of trying to initiate a romance by flirting and enticing a young man just as much as a woman of the world. You must daily judge the wicked tendencies of the flesh as dead and refuse to act according to them. Don’t tease your boyfriend into situations which are contrary to God and uncomfortable for him. You too, dear sister, have a responsibility to provide grass in your courtship.

Real Beauty And Real Vanity

In the world the woman has been made the premiere idol of lust. She is constantly displayed before man in a way calculated to entice and dominate him. Dress (or more likely, the *lack* of it), makeup, perfumes, and so many other things are often produced solely for the purpose of enabling the woman to become more effective as an object of lust. How often in the world’s advertisements to women is the subtle message sent that your goal is to “drive him crazy” in lust and passion by your dress and actions.

Attractiveness, cleanliness, and neat dress are of course vitally important. The Bible encourages taking care of yourself in Prov. 31:22: “*She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.*” But while nice clothing and pleasant fragrances are

good, see to it, dear sisters, that you do not use them for the corrupted purposes for which they are often used in the world.

By all means, take very good care of the body that God has entrusted to you. But never use any of these things to display your body in a sensual manner. Remember that the Word of God instructs you to be modest. Be especially careful of the clothing you wear. Today, women's fashions often purposely reveal or accentuate female sexuality, and with the sole purpose of enticing men. Such clothing styles, if worn in your courtship, will surely kill *grass*.

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (1Tim. 2:9).

Sending Signals

Let's talk a little more about *sending signals*. In Genesis 26:8 we read, *“Isaac was sporting with. . . his wife”*, not with his girl-friend! There are signals between a man and his wife which lead to romantic conduct that is exciting, perfectly normal and appropriate—*BUT ONLY* in the marriage union. You will not have a “grassy” romance if, by your dress, words, and actions you send signals which encourage your boy friend to try *improper sporting*.

Sisters, you possess a very marked ability to “start a fire” by your words, your dress and your ways. Do seek the Lord's help that you might cause *green grass* to grow rather than lighting a fire in your courtship which will burn it up.

How much peace can your boyfriend have—or can your courtship enjoy—if when you are on a date with him you send signals that confuse and entice him to wrong conduct. Read the Song of Solomon carefully. You will see that the wonderful and beautiful expressions and actions of love between the two recorded there are *only* meant to be enjoyed in the marriage union.

Eyes For Him

Eyes send powerful messages—*“Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes”* (S. of S. 4:9). *“Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me”* (S. of S. 6:5). In courtship, you should have eyes only for one special person. If a young man has attracted your heart, be sure you do not continue to look at other young men.

And make sure those eyes of yours are not telling him to act contrary to the Word of God!

God's Word gives very clear warning about the "strange woman" and what she tries to do to a young man with her eyes. "*Neither let her take thee with her eyelid;*" (Prov. 6:25). Don't use your eyes that way! How can you grow grass, dear sisters, if your conduct and actions purposely are meant to tease him or to see how far you can push him?

Don't be daring. That's a lie you constantly hear from the world that encourages young women to wear *daring* clothing, use *daring* language, and act in *daring* ways towards men. If you follow any of these actions can you later place all the blame for a tragic moral fall on your boyfriend by saying, "I never meant for that to happen?" "*Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Gal. 6:7).

Satisfied With Yourself

Sometimes a girl—dissatisfied with how she looks—may unwisely tease or push her boyfriend because of the tremendous pressure she feels to attain to the world's standards of attractiveness. But remember this principle—"*comparing themselves among themselves*" they "*are not wise*" (2 Cor. 10:12).

The danger is that a sister who doesn't feel she measures up to the world's standard of beauty may feel pressed in her courtship to make herself more enticing as a matter of "self-esteem". But really, the root of that is pride. Constantly acting in unseemly ways because you are really demanding reassurances from your boyfriend that you are beautiful and alluring won't allow *grass* in your courtship.

You're Better Than Hollywood

None of us will compare very favorably with the frosting-coated Hollywood stars and fashion models that are constantly seen in public. These corrupted idols are always presented in the media as incredibly handsome or beautiful. But never forget, dear young sister, those *goddesses of immorality* that are so wildly popular for a few years of their life (when they are young) are horribly defiled, unclean, and impure. Their very life-styles are *abomination* to God.

If you don't want to *act* like them (and you surely shouldn't)

then *quit trying to look like them!* God in His sovereign will gave you that unique body. He is pleased and satisfied with what He gave you. “*God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him*” (1 Cor.15:38). Be satisfied with what God is satisfied with and take good care of it. It is priceless. There’s not another one like it in the whole world.

If you’re discontented with the body that God has given you, before trying Hollywood’s methods to improve it, why not spend time talking with its Creator? Let your Father who made you and loves you know all about your discontent and then seek His grace to be satisfied with the unique physical attributes He has seen fit to give you. Don’t go beyond sensible, healthy living habits in caring for the body that God has entrusted to you to be used for His honor.

“*Beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised*” (Prov. 31:30). This does not mean it is wrong to be attractive. God tells us in His Word about several godly women (such as Sarah and Rebekah) who were quite beautiful. But beauty is vain because it will not last. What does last and bring lasting benefits is “the fear of the Lord”.

Headship For Sisters?

Beloved sisters, understand that the world in which we live has completely overthrown the thought of headship established in the man (Gen. 3:16). It teaches and encourages the woman (in countless ways) to use her physical attributes to gain and maintain control and headship over the man. (Consider the story of what Delilah did to Samson, as a striking example—Jud. 16.) Women are taught to take control using their femininity and seductiveness almost as weapons of warfare! Be careful that you don’t allow that in your courtship. No *grass* can grow in an environment which is so contrary to God’s thoughts. Instead of the *grass* of peace you’ll reap the *weeds* of tension.

Don’t Trample The Grass

Many of the world’s activities carried on in dating are those which can easily damage the tender grass of Christian courtship. There are many places and many things the world does that a Christian couple could never, in good conscience find rest or peace doing.

I’m not going to make a list of acceptable dating activities. That’s your responsibility before the Lord and part of the prayer life

and Bible reading life that ought to characterize you and your partner in courtship. However, don't pattern your courtship activities after the world's, just because something is perceived as a cool or exciting thing to do. Always be concerned for the thoughts and the feelings of your partner. Above all, be concerned for the thoughts of the One who created you and brought you both together.

One word regarding acceptable activities. I would encourage young couples to learn the joy of serving the Lord together, either in gospel work or in ministering to brethren. "*Ye know the house of Stephanus...they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*" (1 Cor. 16:15). There are innumerable ways to serve the Lord and His dear people while experiencing all the joy and excitement of courtship.

On the other hand please consider this. God never directs his dear children to go to places where they will be surrounded by defilement, lust, corruption, or violence—nor to a place that will cause their hearts to be attracted in love for this world. Be careful *where* you grow grass in your courtship. "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 Jn. 2:15).

Food For Satisfaction

If your courtship is characterized by "grass" (peace and tranquility), it will next produce "herbs". Herbs are like having what satisfies the heart in a courtship. "*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is*" (Prov. 15:17). A Christian romance ought to provide a deep and growing satisfaction for both partners.

Is It Tasty For Both?

Sometimes I have seen two young people start dating, and the interests of one partner gradually consumes all of the relationship.

Just because a guy is really interested in fixing cars does not mean that every date should take place in his garage working on one! Such courtships often end with the girl becoming no more important than one of the tools necessary for the young man's hobby or pastime. "*Love (charity) seeketh not her own*" (1 Cor. 13:5). And of course this kind of interest (or lack thereof) sends an unmistakable and painful message to the young lady.

While running an errand together to an auto parts store or spending an evening together working on a car might be a lot of fun for a couple once in a while, it will get pretty *unappetizing* for the sister if that's the only kind of dating that takes place. Herbs cannot develop and bear fruit where the weeds of selfishness are growing.

Don't take advantage of your girlfriend's desire to please you dear young brother. Make sure that your dating relationship includes activities that will feed and satisfy both.

Variety Is Healthy

Don't get into the rut of always doing the same thing on a date. Just as God has given us a wide variety of good food to eat, so there ought to be such a variety of experiences enjoyed in a courtship (See 2 Samuel 17:27-29 as an example of the rich variety of food that God gives to satisfy his own in the wilderness). It will take some prayerful thought to plan new and fun dating activities, but your partner is worth the effort and part of the fun and excitement of courtship is to plan for new dating experiences and activities.

Trees For Strength

After there is peace (grass) and satisfaction (herbs), then trees (strength and glory) will develop and provide fruit (a growing sense of love for one another) in your courtship.

So often we hear young people say after the first or second date, "I'm in love!" We all know that trees do not normally grow and yield fruit so fast. They develop over a period of time (in a courtship that might be a long time or a short time, but it is a time of definite development and growth). When a courtship develops and matures properly, the sweet fruit and strength of real and abiding love is the wonderful result.

Christian courtships also have a strength which, by the time the tree is bearing fruit, will be able to withstand the winds of trials and testings that are part of every romantic relationship. Christian romances will need divine strength to withstand the fierce winds of worldly influence as well as other difficulties that will come along.

But then, after all this, what a beautiful thing to behold! A romance between two believers that is characterized by grass, herbs and trees and is founded on solid, dry ground. May God grant the purpose of heart, faith and submission to His will to each dear young

couple, that they might enjoy their relationship as God intends, in the fullest and most joyful way.

Day Four–Lights For The Pathway

V 14–19 “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.”

Wait a minute!?! Hasn't God already (back in day 1) created a separation between light and darkness? Yes, He did. But there it was bringing divine light into a scene that was dark, waste and empty. God is Light (1 John) and what He is and what He does can never be characterized by darkness. So a Christian romance ought to never be characterized by moral darkness.

But now, in day 4, already having that moral light, and a separation between it and darkness, there is something else: the division between day and night. Let's consider that *day* suggests the thought of work and activity, while *night* would suggest a time of inactivity and rest. “*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*” (Jn. 9:4).

A Maturing Romance

A courtship truly directed by God needs times of activity (day) and times of rest (night). It also needs *seasons* to sprout, grow and develop, and it needs *years* to mature. Though not speaking of actual chronological time, each time period is very important to observe.

Sometimes, young couples who are in the early flush of the excitement of a new dating relationship with that special person never seem able to be apart from each other. Wherever one is found, the other is too. That may seem really cute and romantic, but it will quickly strain and wither the relationship.

Further, such conduct tends to choke out the *seasons* and *years*

in which the romance grows and matures. We find this principle in Mk. 4:28, “*First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*”.

This doesn’t mean that a romance might not take place quickly as to actual time. Where there is a real sense of the Lord’s guiding towards marriage, I personally feel that *shorter* is better than *longer*. But even in short romances, if ordered according to God’s principles, the moral principle of days and nights, seasons and years will be found to have their appropriate place.

Don’t “Break Up”–Take A Break

As a courtship grows there are times when it will need a rest–*night*. I certainly don’t mean to suggest that the feelings of affection for each other and their appropriate display should ever rest–rather, they should continue to grow. But the activity of dating sometimes needs to have a rest. Always being together every minute of every day is not a wise or morally healthy thing in a Christian courtship.

If you find that you just cannot ever be away from your partner–can never have a spare moment for anything else but being in their company, seek the Lord’s help in finding out what is out of balance.

The Need of Light During Rest

During the *resting time* of a courtship, partners do not have liberty to act as if they were not courting. Even at night, if the moon is shining, it is quite easy to see where you are going. Darkness (sin) allowed in either partner when they are not together is just as bad as allowing it when they are together. Such allowance of sin is sure to have harmful effects on a courtship.

Remember that you can’t be more spiritual in your courtship *with your partner* (day), then what you are spiritually when you are *alone* (the night) with God. What a person is in public forms their *reputation*, but what they are in private with God, forms their *character*. Being the same whether together or apart creates confidence and trust in each partner–a vital ingredient for a happy, fruitful courtship.

“*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*” (Psa.139:23, 24).

Being A Star

You can chart a course at night, even if there is no moonlight, by following the stars. May God grant that each who are in a courtship, or planning on entering into one, become a such star. How wonderful if your romance sets a Godly example (starlight) by which others can find guidance and direction for their courtship.

Submission to God's will and obedience to His Word will result in a Christian courtship which will not only be joyous for the partners, but will also be a guide to others. "*Whose faith follow*" (Heb.13:7).

Day Five–The Appearance of Life.

V 20–23 “And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.”

Life in the waters is created. I mentioned earlier that we would consider the waters or seas might suggest the world's thoughts and opinions of dating. Such thoughts –the very spirit of this godless world–will always provide a hostile environment for Christian courtships. Yet if a courtship is of God, it will thrive and live in even these adverse circumstances. Trials and difficulties (which are sure to come) should never drown a courtship directed by God.

I don't know if I have ever witnessed anything so majestic and graceful as the sight of whales moving through the water in huge marine aquariums. The water is but the medium for this majestic animal to display its grace as it moves. And the beautiful colors and variety of ocean sea life are beyond description! Trials which present themselves in your romance should simply be the means by which its spiritual beauty, grace and strength are displayed.

Courtship Isn't Pain Free

The world presents a very false concept of romance, teaching that when two people fall in love, everything will always be blissful and exciting. It suggests that “love means never having to say you

are sorry”. These kinds of false, godless principles cannot sustain true love through trials and testings.

Beloved young people, the courtship you are in– or the one you are praying about entering–is indeed a wonderful and exciting sphere. And though courtships won’t always face conflicts, they will certainly meet with the waters of adversity at times.

If your relationship is directed by God’s principles however, you and your partner will discover that these very times of trials produce and sustain the most beautiful and awesome displays of true, living love. “*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness*” (Jud. 14:14).

Living Hopes And Dreams

After God created abundant life in the waters He created the winged fowl that fly in the heavens. We will liken these to the hopes, dreams, and plans which ought to be a wonderful and normal part of Christian romance. Such hopes are given reality and life, according to God’s will, through prayer. Together, both partners should be planning and thinking about their future marriage, careers, family and the many other things that make up the beautiful fabric of married life. Though we must always keep before us the *blessed hope of our Lord’s return*, planning, sharing hopes and dreams, and praying together about them ought never be lacking in courtship.

Our Lord Jesus wants His bride to be thinking of all that awaits her and the Holy Spirit “*shall take of mine (Christ), and shall shew it unto you*” (Jn. 16:15). How often we read about those wonderful hopes that belong to us–hopes of seeing Him, being with and like Him, sharing all of His glory in the Father’s house for all eternity. The Lord wants us to have fellowship with Him enjoying our blessed hope–hope which is really a *deferred assurance*.

How the heart of Rebekah must have been filled with excitement as the servant spent those dreary days of that long trip across the wilderness telling her of the glories of her future husband and all that belonged to him, and all that would be hers as his wife. What hopes and dreams it must have stirred in her heart.

No Hopes Or Dreams Means A Red Light!

If one partner in a courtship is reluctant to pray about, dream

of, and plan for the future together with the other, it would be well to be very hesitant about continuing the relationship (see Luke 14:28-30 for the principle). It is not normal for a serious Christian courtship to have no display of this kind of life “in the heavens”.

A courtship cannot survive if one partner is too self-centered to think and plan for the future soberly and prayerfully. Of course the Lord Jesus may come at any moment—He has promised to do so. But while longing and looking for His return, a couple who are in a serious romantic relationship ought to also be planning for their future should the Lord leave us here. Above all, see that your courtship is one in which *praying* together for guidance, help, and wisdom is a natural and valued part of dating.

“*Praying always*” (Eph. 6:18).

Day 6—Courtship Completed

V 24, 25 “*And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.*”

We now come to what we might call courtship’s completion. God is about to bring the man and woman into His creation—as husband and wife (which is the very point of courtship). Before He does however, God populates the dry ground with *living creatures* even as the waters and the heavens have been populated with them.

Romance Needs Animals

Dry ground is the foundation upon which life is *displayed* in creation, and it is the last (or we may say the highest) place it is displayed in courtship. Previously life was displayed in the sea (courtship thrives in the face of problems) and in the air (courtship appropriately has hopes, plans and dreams). Now we have *living creatures* displayed—conditions which are necessary in order that a courtship ends in a happy and vibrant marriage union.

“Cattle” In Courtship

There are three categories of animal life which populate the dry ground—*cattle*, *creeping things*, and *beasts of the earth*. We’ll look at

these as principles which must be *living realities* in a courtship, *before* marriage begins. Without them, I fear that marriage relationships run a solemn risk of shipwreck and ruin.

Let's look at cattle as representing life that *provides* for and *supports* a marriage. Remember beloved young people, it is just as impossible for two people to *live on love* as it is for two to live together *without love*. Thus the future husband must possess the ability to financially support and care for the woman he plans to marry.

What Are "Cattle"?

It just isn't normal for a young man to have no ability or desire to produce *cattle*...that is, no job prospects...no employable skills...no way adequately to support his future wife—or, worse yet, no concerns about that situation. Be very careful dear young sister about making a commitment for life if there is a question whether your marriage can be financially sustained.

Financial stability is not the same thing as financial wealth. Being concerned about financial stability is far different from seeking to get rich. One is born of *the love of money* which comes of coveteousness and greed while the other is born of *the love of a woman*. One is sin—while God encourages the other.

This does not contradict Philippians 4:19—"*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*". We are to always trust our God to supply our needs, but that doesn't mean we don't have to work. God's supply of suitable employment for a husband is His divine way of supplying the needs of a marriage. How many needless difficulties and stress young couples face in courtship and later, in marriage, when there is an appropriate lack of concern about "cattle"!

Providing *cattle* to support a marriage union is your responsibility dear young brother. Remember the admonition to Joshua? *Be strong and of a good courage*. God made you a man—act like one!

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" (Gen. 3:19). *"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"* (2 Thess. 3:10).

Over-Valued Cattle

On the other hand, sisters do be careful about getting into a serious relationship with a young man who tries to attract your attention and affection by bragging about how much *he has*. A Godly young man ought rather to seek to show you what *he is*. It's far more important to find out the depth of his spirituality than the size of his bank account or the value of his belongings.

Brothers you too need to be careful with a young woman who is attracted by and displays her affections based on how expensive the car you drive and the clothing you wear are, or based on how much you can afford to spend on her. Such a girl is not displaying the qualities which characterize that wonderful and godly woman we read about in Proverbs 31—one God calls a *virtuous woman*.

To be overly attracted to and influenced by material possessions is like trying to place cattle into creation before there is even light or dry ground or grass to support them. While finances and possessions are some of the important considerations that are part of a normal courtship, they can never be allowed to become the sole basis for beginning one. Nor can they, by themselves, bring happiness or the emotional support necessary for a lifetime commitment to marriage.

“Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph. 5:3).

Who Provides The Cattle?

Often before marriage a sister is engaged in some kind of employment. However, her continued working at a full-time job after marriage is not according to normal Christianity.

While there are times when a wife may continue for a time in some sort of outside employment, it is not according to God's order that marriage be based on the necessity of the wife to spend her life in full-time employment outside the home. Under normal circumstances, what Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:14 should characterize the responsibility for providing cattle in a romance—*“I will that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house”*. It is the husband who is warned that he as a believer, is responsible to *“provide for...his own house”* (1 Tim. 5:8).

Remember beloved young people, its very good training as well as an excellent gauge of character for a young man to bear the

financial burden of a courtship, just as he will be responsible to bear that same burden in a marriage union.

The Price Of Cattle

It often seems in present economic circumstances that a young couple can't really make it financially unless both plan to work full-time. But God never gives His children instructions or principles that are impossible to follow.

What is really needed more than both marriage partners planning to work full-time is that the man make sober, serious preparations in order to "*provide for his own*". He is especially responsible to see that his courtship and marriage is characterized by having enough cattle. "*Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house*" (Prov. 24:27).

A wife and family can't be supported on the wage earned at a fast food restaurant. There's nothing wrong or dishonorable about working at such a job. It can provide excellent training and discipline for future responsibilities. But, dear young brother, if you're going to accept the responsibility of marriage and family, be sure you've equipped yourself with the skills necessary to get a job paying an adequate wage.

Important Little Things

Next come the "creeping things"—lowly, humble, creatures. Though they may be insignificant, it is vital that the life of creeping things also be displayed in a Christian courtship. There are countless little details and interests which affect both partners in a courtship—countless ways in which each partner can serve the other unnoticed. These *little things* are the tiny threads woven throughout the fabric of life—threads that will eventually form the beautiful garment of a Christian marriage.

Marriage cannot be sustained in happiness just by having lots of cattle. Nor can it flourish if it's constantly stressed by the fear of not having enough cattle. But if the man's job and how much he is earning are the only real interests existing in a courtship, something is badly out of balance and sad times are ahead.

Suppose for instance that before they were married, whenever Jacob came in from the field and talked with Rachel about his day,

she showed no interest whatsoever in how the lambs were doing, or where Jacob had fed the flock that day, the difficulties he had encountered, or how tired he had become in working to gain her.

Or suppose that Jacob showed not the slightest interest in the woman's garment that Rachel had spent the day sewing, in what had gone on among the family members that while he was away, in what food she had prepared for meals that day, or in any of the countless details of the home.

Obviously if these things had been so it would have been difficult to believe that the *seven years* of Jacob's hard service to earn the right to marry Rachel seemed *but a few days for the love he had to her*. Little details, insignificant things—these must be of interest to each partner in a courtship and marriage union.

Should one partner display absolutely no interest in the little things that interest the other, or make no effort to serve the other quietly in many unseen ways, the courtship is probably not really a living, growing thing. Certainly it's not one that is ready to culminate in marriage. Life displayed by *creeping things* is vital.

"She hath done what she could..." (Mk. 14:8).

Important Big Things

The "*beast of the earth*" is the final created life mentioned before man is created. These ought to characterize Christian courtship. The *beast of the earth* represents those important decisions made which will have a lasting impact on marriage—decisions about life-styles, housing, geographic location, employment, family size, and many others. Though it might seem obvious that such decisions would form a part of a mature courtship, sometimes a young couple may not give proper attention to the "beast of the field". Sad strife may result from a courtship which does not have this sign of life.

How very important that both partners together be prayerfully involved in each big decision! While the man is to maintain headship and guidance, that does not mean that he disregards the wishes and desires of the one he plans to marry. He bears responsibility, takes leadership, but his fiancée' ought to know with confidence that her thoughts and wishes are lovingly and seriously considered—that she has part in each important decision being made in their marriage.

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (Prov. 31:11).

Dominion Over Circumstances

Creation is now complete. Man is created—male and female—and placed in that beautiful scene, the garden of Eden. They are there in the image and likeness of God, to have dominion over all that has been prepared. So it is with a couple who are culminating their courtship in marriage. They are to have dominion over, not be dominated by, the circumstances of their romance, marriage and home they establish. And as a young couple walk in the fear of God they will find all the light and guidance needed in order to enjoy this most blessed of natural relationships instituted of God for man.

Each event that comprises the fabric of a courtship ought to prepare for and lead to the “creation” of the “male and female” (the marriage union). We have said previously, dating is not a recreational sport! It ought never be viewed as a casual activity—something that is just a normal part of teen years and not taken seriously. It is the very activity that leads to a life time union—two becoming one. Oh! beloved young readers, do take this relationship very seriously!

Once in the happy union of marriage, the man and his wife together exercise dominion over all that takes place in their domain. In Genesis 2 Adam and Eve are placed in a beautiful garden (which we may see as a picture of the marriage union) where Adam is told to “guard” it. Prayerful obedience to the principles of God is the way in which you will exercise that dominion and guard your courtship and marriage. Cattle, creeping things, and the beasts of the field, though necessary and right, should never dominate and control Christian courtship and marriage—man is to have dominion over all creation.

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. . . and God ended his work. . . and he rested” (Gen. 1:31, 2:2). May each young person who reads this meditation be given grace to follow the Word of God, applying its instructions and principles to the wonderful and exciting world of courtship. Such a path will bring joy to a Christian couple, and more importantly, will not grieve the heart of God who brought them together. What sweet rest can be enjoyed when this is so!

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

Questions About Courtship

Since the first printing of this booklet various dear young people (and older ones too) have asked some excellent questions regarding the wonderful sphere of Christian courtship. I have summarized these questions and trust that they and the answers given will be of benefit and help to those interested in this subject.

“I’ve really been praying for a life’s companion. I want the Lord to bring me someone special, but He doesn’t seem to be answering my prayers. Nothing is happening. What’s wrong?”

Be assured that something *is* happening—the Lord has heard your prayers and knows your desires. However faith does not try to set a time limit on when the Lord will answer. It patiently and trustingly waits until the Lord is pleased to grant your desire. In Psa. 37 we are told to *trust* and *delight* ourselves to the Lord, *commit* our way to Him and then *rest* and *wait for the Lord* to give us His perfect and loving answer.

Its not always easy to *rest* and *wait* for the Lord to work but doing so honors Him because it is a proof of your faith and confidence in Him. Remember what Adam did to find a life’s companion for himself? *Absolutely nothing!* He just went to sleep—he was completely inactive—while God prepared his companion. Perhaps this is what the Lord is doing for you at the very time you think *nothing is happening*. He wants you to *sleep*—that is, leave everything with Him and trust Him to bring you the right person at the right time. The Lord Jesus “*doeth all things well*”. He perfectly understands the desires of your heart.

Also, it is during these very times when *nothing* seems to be happening that the Lord is working to form you into a man of God—one to whom He can entrust the care and well-being of another of His precious lambs as your life’s companion.

But this assumes that your life is not grieving the heart of the Lord. Our God is a perfect, all loving and all wise Father. But if a disobedient child asks Him for something, He may not grant that desire. A wise parent does not give a treat to a naughty child. See to it that your life and ways are fully submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“I’ve met a lot of nice Christian girls (guys) but how do I know which one, if any of them, is the Lord’s choice for me?”

By earnest and continual prayer and reading of God’s Word. In Prov. 4:23 we read, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*”. Too often young people quickly allow their heart to become attached to another—before they have sought the Lord’s mind through prayer and reading. Later such relationships often fall apart resulting in sorrow and broken hearts.

Another has well said that it is important to see how a young woman treats her father and how a young man treats his mother. Such actions are quite an accurate gauge for how they will treat their spouse. “*Honor thy father and mother*” (Eph. 6:2).

Consider too the issue of compatibility. God asks a very searching question in Amos 3:3—“*Can two walk together except they be agreed?*”. Marrying a Christian is of course the fundamental and essential foundation for a happy marriage. However having similar exercises about the serving the Lord, a career, where to live, a family, finances, and many other things, is also critical if two believers are to walk in happy agreement with one another, experiencing the delight of a joyful and peaceful marriage.

Though she was deceiving Samson, Delialah’s words provide a vitally important principle—“*How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me?*” It is very important for young people to find out *before* getting into a serious relationship, whether the heart of their partner is *with them* in their exercises before the Lord.

“*The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man [or woman] looketh well to his going*” (Prov. 14:15).

“I really feel attracted to a Christian girl and I’ve felt this way for some time. But I don’t know if she is interested in me and I’m scared of being rejected. How do I go about letting her know I have feelings for her?”

“*Quit you like men (act like a man)*” (1 Cor. 16:13). It is indeed a scary thing to approach a young sister that you have developed feelings for to let her know how you feel. And the thought of being rejected by one who has attracted your heart can sure turn your otherwise strong knees into jelly! But God has created you a man and He wants you to act like what you are. *He giveth more grace.*

How does a man act? He takes the lead—he makes the first move in expressing his interest in a young lady. Ruth was counseled by her mother-in-law concerning Boaz, “*Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day*” (Ruth 3:18). I say again, *you* are the man, and to you falls the responsibility of initiating a courtship by expressing your interest in a sister.

There are of course a multitude of ways to express your interest and the Lord will guide you as to the right way for your particular circumstances. There are no *rules* for this, only God’s guidance.

I would add one other thing. It is good (though perhaps not always possible) to let the parents of the young lady know of your intentions. Our society encourages young people, especially young women, to be *independent thinkers* and to *act independently*. But the principle of independence is not found in the Word of God. We find there instead, “*In the multitude of counsellors there is safety*” (Prov. 11:14). Further we read of Jacob that when he expressed his love and desire to have Rachel as his wife, he spoke to her father first (Gen. 29:15).

Do you still feel scared to let your feelings be known to the young lady you care for? You are not acting as a man! You will need wisdom from God to know when and how to express those feelings, but to keep them hidden is not what a man of God does. Further, it is not fair to the young woman to not let her know how you feel. Of course she may tell you she is not interested—the Lord allows her to have a will in the matter of a life’s companion—just as Rebekah was asked, “Wilt thou go with this man?” She could have said “no, I will not go” and that would have been the end of the matter. That decision was properly hers to make and in Rebekah’s case she said, “I will go”. But the man (in this case the servant of Abraham) did the asking, not the woman.

Be a man dear young brother, be a man!

“What if a Christian guy that I have feelings for seems like he’s interested in me but is too shy to say or do anything about it? Shouldn’t I send some signals or do something to initiate a courtship? After all, I want him to know I’m interested too.”

Part of my answer will be to repeat what was said previously. It is the place of the man to initiate a courtship with a woman, not the

reverse. Our precious Savior and Lord has left us a perfect example to follow in Eph. 5:25, “. . . *Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. . .*”. The Lord Jesus came seeking the lost, He initiated work and effort which has resulted in believers being united to Him forever, members of His body and His bride. It was the Lord Jesus who prophetically answered in Isa. 6:8, “. . . *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me*”.

1 Tim. 2:9-15 and 1 Pet. 3:1-6 women are taught to have a *meek* (*modest*) and *quiet* spirit, not doing or wearing things that would make her an object of attention. Submission and modesty of spirit are rare qualities in women today, but ought to be displayed in every Christian woman’s life.

It really is out of the character of a woman of God to take the lead, especially in the sphere of courtship. In Proverbs it is the *strange woman* (a morally corrupt woman) who initiates a relationship with a young man with her *much fair speech* and the *flattery of her lips*. The character of this immoral woman is that she “makes the moves” in a relationship— action which is common and prevalent in the Western world today. But such manner of life and frowardness ought never to characterize a Christian woman.

It is certainly not wrong to talk to him without *chasing* him, return a smile or friendly gesture without *flirting*. The Lord will always give wisdom for your conduct. But it is not your place to “make the first moves” if you would maintain your dignity and proper place as a woman of God.

And, quite frankly, if the young man acts as though he is interested but doesn’t seem willing to begin a courtship, perhaps he is not as interested as you wish, or he’s not mature enough to handle a serious relationship. “*Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD*” (Psa. 27:14).

“I don’t see why dating a lot of different Christian girls (or guys) before getting serious is wrong. How else will I find out who is really the right one for me?”

Such thinking is according to the wisdom of the world not the wisdom of God. It may seem like a natural and wise thing to do—to shop around before making a decision. But a sister is not a car or piece of furniture or a computer and “comparison shopping” for a

life's companion has no Scriptural warrant.

A sister is to be treated *in all purity* as a *weaker vessel*. Casual, recreational dating can easily take advantage of her tender feelings and is at its root, a very selfish thing. It satisfies only a superficial desire using a relationship meant to be entered into soberly and in the fear of God. Worst of all, such dating makes nothing of the importance of faith in the Lord and prayer that He will guide you to the right individual.

Soberly entering a dating relationship with a sister with the realization that she might become your life's companion is far different than dating a sister so that you have something to do on Friday nights. Don't tamper with the delicate and easily crushed feelings of a young sister if you are not serious in your intentions. (If you are a sister, don't accept a date with a young man that you could never view as a potential life's companion).

It is possible that when there is a serious relationship, the partners may come to realize that their friendship does not seem destined to develop into a lifetime commitment. Being prayerful, careful and completely honest with each other is safe and will keep hearts from being devastated. Prov. 6:1-5 gives excellent instruction and principles for how to soberly and carefully handle a relationship that is not working out.

Above all else, don't ever "shop" around when dealing with the heart affections of another Christian. Girls, you can break a young brother's heart too. Be careful!

“Is there anything wrong with dating a Christian guy I have feelings for, even though neither one of us is ready for a serious relationship? Can't we just date as good friends until we know we're ready to get serious?”

I believe courtship–dating is *only* for those who are serious in their feelings for another. Prov. 24:27 instructs us to “Prepare *thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house*”. It is clear from the principle found here that courtship comes *after* there is an ability *and* desire to begin and maintain a *serious relationship*.

If you do not feel ready to get serious, or if the guy you like is not ready for a serious relationship, dating will probably lead to a

ruined, unhappy courtship leaving one or both of your hearts broken.

Luke 14:28-32 gives an important principle about counting the cost *before* beginning a project to see if it can be successfully completed. I urge you to sit down first *before* dating the guy you have feelings for, and prayerfully consider if the Lord is leading you into a relationship which can be sustained. If you do not have peace that a serious dating relationship can be sustained, or if you just don't know for sure, than its better to not *begin to build something* you aren't sure can be completed.

This is not to say that you can't maintain a friendship with the guy you have feelings for. You can certainly communicate with each other, share your spiritual exercises and seek to encourage each other in the Lord. And doing these kinds of things will tend to show whether there is a possibility of having a serious relationship.

“What’s wrong with just being good friends with a girl (or a guy) without any interest in becoming romantically involved? Good friends can really help each other through some of the trials of Christian life can’t they?”

I feel it is very difficult and morally dangerous for a man and a woman to be just “good friends” with no thought of romantic involvement. This principle is brought out very plainly in the book of Ruth. In Ruth 2:8 Boaz tells her to *abide fast by my maidens*. Though in a place where she could easily mix with and form friendships with the young men, Boaz warned her to stay with his young women.

Further Boaz warns his young men *not to touch* Ruth showing that when men and women form friendships with each other, romantic feelings and intimacies are very likely to develop.

Ruth did not seem to understand the importance of what Boaz had said to her for later, when talking to her mother-in-law, she tells Naomi, “*he (Boaz) said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest*”. Naomi immediately caught Ruth's mistake and wisely told her, “*It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens*”.

This does not mean that young people cannot be *friendly* to each other, but to become a *close friend* suggests a far deeper, more intimate relationship than mere friendliness. We read that “*Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's*

friend by hearty counsel” (Prov. 27:9). An intimate friendship such as this would not be seemly between a man and woman who are not romantically interested in each other.

King David’s closest friend was probably Jonathan, but two others are also mentioned as being his *friends*—Hushai and Nathan—both men. The Word of God is strangely silent about men and women who are not romantically involved with each other being close friends. Further, in the New Testament the Apostle Paul warns Timothy (a young man) that when dealing with young women, he is to look at them as *sisters in Christ* (not as *close friends*) and talk to them *in all purity* (1 Tim. 5:2).

The world in which we live has developed a very casual attitude about relationships between men and women. The lines of separation in male-female relationships which are clearly found in Scripture have been blurred beyond recognition, thanks in a large part to the Hollywood entertainment and professional sports industry. At the same time, marital infidelity, divorce, and full blown immorality are rampant and rising.

I would earnestly plead with you not to willingly or casually form *close friendships* with members of the opposite sex. Realize too that being overly friendly to a guy or a girl sends them the wrong signals. You may not mean for your friendship to be anything more than just *good friends*, but the one with whom you are forming that friendship may read your friendliness and confidences in them as a desire for a romantic relationship. The end of such a situation is a broken heart for one or both of you.

Consider too the difficulty of entering a courting relationship with a person your heart has been attracted to, only to find that they are very close friends with another guy (or girl). How would it make you feel knowing that the guy you have fallen in love with has a very good friend that he often communicates with, who is also a girl! *God is not the author of confusion* and such a situation is based on emotional and moral confusion, though there may not be any moral sin involved in that relationship.

A very important *principle* is found Gen. 7:2: “. . . the male and *his* female”. God has provided *one* companion for the male—*his female*—but there’s no allowance for “the male, his female *and his female friend*”.

“I know of a certain nice Christian guy (or girl) who is interested in me, but I have no feelings for him (her). Does the Lord expect me to marry someone I don’t have feelings for just because they are a Christian and are interested in me?”

No. He allows you to have a will in that matter. Rebekah was asked “Wilt thou go with this man?”—she was not *commanded* “Thou wilt go with this man”.

The same *principle* is found in 1 Cor. 7 where a Christian widow or widower is allowed by God to remarry—*she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord* (1 Cor. 7:39). The Lord who created each of us knows that we have unique personalities that will respond in different ways to different people. He has not made us all the same. The *principle* is found in 1 Cor. 15:38 where we read that “*God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body*”. Thus, in grace the Lord does allow a will in the matter of a life’s companion, only He warns that your choice of a companion is to be *in the Lord* (a compatible Christian with similar exercises and desires for the Lord).

“I’ve tried every way I know how, to let a Christian guy (or a girl) realize I don’t have any feelings for them and am not interested in a relationship— but they won’t give up. Now what?”

Before you do anything, make sure you are sending clear, unmistakable signals that you are not interested in a romantic relationship. And don’t make yourself available for *friendly talks* with someone who has a crush on you. Sometimes we like others to pay this kind of attention to us, even though we have no intention of being romantically involved. Ask the Lord to help you judge anything in your actions which might be sending the wrong message to the one who is interested in you.

Then, if a guy still won’t take “no” for an answer, you need to go to your parents and/or brethren and have them help you. We read that “*in the multitude of counsellors there is safety*” (Prov. 11:14). Also we are reminded that “*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*” (Prov. 17:17). Confide in your parents and your brethren and seek their godly advice and help.

If a girl won’t take “no” for an answer you might want to consider talking with her parents to make sure they understand that

you don't want to hurt their daughter, but you have no romantic feelings for her. And, above all, in all your thoughts, draw close to the Lord Jesus for wisdom. He will not fail you, but He does want your complete obedience and trust.

Don't deal with such a situation in a spirit of frustration or anger. "*A soft answer turneth away wrath*". "*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all*" (2 Tim. 2:24). Remember that the one to whom you are saying "no" belongs to Christ and is infinitely precious to Him. How you treat that person matters very much, not only to them, but to their precious Savior. Be gentle!

“Are there really any clear guides in the Bible for how I am supposed to act with my girlfriend (boyfriend)? What are the acceptable limits God sets for physical contact before marriage?”

Of course there are. And though the Bible is not a “how to do it” manual for romance it is full of principles which the Spirit of God will apply as you and your partner seek to walk in submission and obedience to His Word.

Romance is very exciting—appropriately so—for the deepest feelings and passions of the heart are touched and exercised towards each other in a serious courtship. Because of this you will both need to be very much before the Lord—both individually and together—to seek His help and wisdom for your romantic conduct. For example, make it a normal habit to pray when going on dates. Pray for the Lord's help that your conduct with each other would be pleasing to Him, above reproach, and would treat each other in all purity.

There are physical intimacies enjoyed between a man and a woman which are part of the wonder and beauty of the marriage union. Proverbs 5:18,19 is just one of the passages which encourages such joys of physical intimacy within marriage. The Song of Solomon is another beautiful series of the deepest kind of romantic expressions of love between a husband and wife. But these joys are clearly not to be experienced outside the marriage bond. Thus you will ever need the Lord's wisdom for the kinds of physical conduct that are appropriate within your courtship before marriage.

In Prov. 30:18,19 four things are mentioned which *are too wonderful* to fully understand. One is *the way of a man with a maid*. This suggests to our hearts that while the Lord will give all the

wisdom and grace needed for a happy and exciting courtship, physical contact in courtship is a very personal and very private matter between a man and a woman—a matter of personal exercise before the Lord alone.

Of course the Word of God is very clear on certain kinds of conduct. Sexual intimacy before marriage is *fornication*—something which God calls sin. Yet the very same act, when carried out *within the marriage union*, is part of the natural joy with which God has blessed the sphere of marriage.

God’s Word is also very clear that any physical contact—a touch—between an unmarried man and woman is to be avoided. In 1 Cor. 7:1 where Paul says “*it is good for a man not to touch a woman*”, the sense in the original Greek language is not to touch a woman in a way *that lights a fire* of passion. This verse however does not, for example, forbid an unmarried man and woman from shaking hands. But it does clearly forbid *any kind* of physical contact that might stir up unholy passions and desires between them.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thess. 5:22 to “*abstain* (“avoid”) *from all appearance of evil*”. This simple instruction, if acted on through a tender conscience and a desire to honor the Lord in every aspect of your courtship, will keep you from falling into any conduct which could lead you into sin, unhappiness and broken hearts.

Remember, in your courtship *purity in conduct* is indispensable.

“*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example [“model”] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*” (1Tim. 4:12).

L. D. N., 2002

