

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR COURTSHIP & MARRIAGE

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:31-33

Introduction:

1. Let me start off by saying I am adamantly opposed to the modern dating game. I have always tried to keep it out of our church.
2. Young people should avoid dating. When they are older and wiser and more mature, they can give careful and prayerful consideration to courtship and marriage.
3. In the Bible, marriage is a beautiful picture of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).
4. As pastors and as parents, we want to see our young people marry the right mate – we desire God’s choice.
5. Obviously this means the mate must be saved. Second Corinthians 6:14 says, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”
6. But there is much more to a happy marriage than just the husband and wife being saved. Are they both totally surrendered to the will of God? (Romans 12:1, 2)
7. Are they compatible? Do their parents approve?
8. As loving parents, we desire to see the Lord’s guidance and the Lord’s blessing in their courtship and throughout their marriage.
9. Unfortunately, many churches, and many pastors, and many parents, and many children are being influenced by the increasingly pagan culture in which we live.
10. Therefore, young people are being guided by the world, rather than by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

11. And if they are being led by the world, they are heading for trouble because the Bible says Satan is “the god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4).
12. There are unalterable Biblical principles that can help guide our steps in this very important matter.
13. We who are responsible (particularly parents as well as pastors) to guide our young people in this most important decision must understand these timeless Biblical principles.
14. We must understand that the Word of God is completely sufficient to equip a Christian for every challenge. It is our responsibility to apply by faith the Bible’s timeless truths to the culture in which we live.
15. I would like to divide my message into five parts. Here are five key words: patience, prayer, providence, purity, and parents.

I. PATIENCE WHILE WAITING ON GOD

II. PRAY FOR GOD’S CHOICE

III. PROVIDENTIAL LEADING OF GOD

IV. PURITY BEFORE MARRIAGE

V. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

I. PATIENCE WHILE WAITING ON GOD

1. Isaiah 64:4 says, “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.”
2. A while back, my wife and I read an excellent book by Andrew Murray entitled, *Waiting on God*. My wife told me, “I did not realize the Bible had so much to say about waiting on God.” Indeed it does!
3. Psalm 25:3-5 says, “Yea, let none that wait on Thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day.”

4. Psalm 27:14 says, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”
5. One of the problems with the dating system (at least as it is practiced in America) is it is not encouraging young people to patiently wait for God’s choice.
6. I heard one preacher say, “Dating is not preparing young people for marriage; it is preparing them for divorce.”
7. I am afraid he was right.
8. Another preacher said, “Every time a young man gets emotionally attached to a young woman he gives her a piece of his heart. Some young people go through this process several times before they get married. Before they get married they do not have much heart left!”
9. This dating system sounds more like the Hollywood method rather than God’s method.
10. Our Lord said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).
11. So the first step is patience.

II. PRAY FOR GOD’S CHOICE

1. We know the Bible teaches over and over again that God answers prayer. Our Lord said in Matthew 21:22, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”
2. Our Lord said in Luke 11:9, 10, “And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”
3. Certainly these promises should be applied to finding a godly mate. Therefore, we should teach our young people to pray for God’s direction. This is far more important than which college they attend, and which career they follow.

4. And while they are praying and waiting, they should be busy serving God. And of course, we parents should be praying as well.
5. “Pray without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17).

III. THE PROVIDENTIAL LEADING OF GOD

1. There are many examples of this in the Bible. The most well known example would be the beautiful story of Isaac and Rebekah found in Genesis 24.
2. Here we see both prayer and providence working together beautifully. Abraham’s servant prayed (Genesis 24:12-14).
3. And God answered his prayer in a wonderful, unmistakable way (24:15, 16).
4. Abraham’s servant knew the Lord was leading (Genesis 24:26, 27).
5. Another wonderful story is the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. In Ruth 2:1-3 we see the old-fashioned English word “hap” (from where we get the words “happen,” “hapless,” “happenstance,” etc.).
6. Ruth did not just “happen” to be in the field of Boaz. This was the providential leading of God.
7. This divine leading through circumstances is what we call “the Providence of God.”
8. It was the will of God for Ruth to marry Boaz (cf. Matt. 1:5, 6, 16).

IV. PURITY BEFORE MARRIAGE

1. This is the biggest problem with dating. Oftentimes dating leads to immorality. (There are many other problems too – e.g., emotional involvement.)
2. A while back, an evangelist friend of mine was shown a letter by a youth pastor. The letter was written to the youth pastor by a young lady in his youth group. She was pregnant but she was not married. She had since gotten right with the Lord and wrote this letter to apologize to her youth pastor. It was a sincere, well-written letter, showing genuine repentance. In the letter she urged her youth pastor, “Don’t ever stop preaching about even holding hands because that’s where it all starts.”
3. This same evangelist wrote an article about immorality among American young people. It is not a pretty picture. He wrote, “Everyday in America 7,742 teenagers step into moral impurity and lose their virginity. Everyday in America over 4,000 teenagers contract a sexually transmitted disease. Everyday in America 2,795 teenagers get pregnant.”
4. He goes on to say, “Certainly we are finding the ‘free love’ of the 60’s wasn’t so free after all. It has come with a tremendous price tag.”

5. A lot of the blame must fall on Hollywood, TV, rock music, etc. But I think some of the blame has to go to parents and pastors who allow their young people to get involved in dating.
6. The Biblical principle behind courtship is the desire to keep oneself pure for marriage.
7. A young couple does not start courting unless they are sure this is God's will for them to marry. And they should not spend time alone. There should be other young people around.
8. Parents and other adults should be around.
9. The Bible has many warnings about the dangers of immorality. King Solomon, speaking to his son, says, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell" (Proverbs 5:1-5; cf. 9:13-18).
10. Solomon said the same thing in Proverbs 7:27, "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."
11. Immorality leads people to hell (Prov. 5:4, 5). Our Lord said pretty much the same thing when He said in Mark 9:43, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched."
12. First Corinthians 6:9, 10 says that adulterers shall not inherit the kingdom of God (cf. Gal. 5:19-21).
13. Ephesians 5:5 says, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
14. Colossians 3:5, 6 says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."
15. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."
16. Revelation 21:8 says, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
17. With so many warnings about the danger of immorality, we parents (and especially preachers) ought to be doing everything we can to help our young people find the right mate and avoid making mistakes that could ruin their lives.

18. Proverbs 6:32, 33 says, “But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”

V. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT (GEN. 24:1-4).

1. I strongly believe that God uses the parents to guide children to His perfect will for their lives.
2. Most Christian parents guide their children through their school years. They guide them regarding their friends and their career choices. They even guide them as they purchase their first car.
3. But when it comes to the most important decision of all (after salvation), parents often stay out of it.
4. I realize that God in His grace and mercy often blesses a marriage despite the parents’ limited involvement.
5. But unfortunately, oftentimes the marriage (even Christian marriage) ends in misery and even divorce.
6. I remember when a good friend of mine told me his daughter was dating a Roman Catholic. I suggested he put an end to the relationship right away. He told me, “She’s a big girl now; it’s her life, etc.” and he made no effort to stop it.
7. That marriage soon ended in divorce. They had one son, and now their son has serious behavioral problems. I could tell other similar sad stories.
8. We already considered the story of Isaac and Rebekah. Many defenders of modern dating insist that parental involvement is simply too old-fashioned. Well, the Bible is an old-fashioned book!
9. Many godly parents have come to understand that the choice between courtship and dating for their children is not a cultural but a Biblical issue.
10. I began this message by reading Ephesians 5:31. The apostle Paul is quoting Genesis 2:24. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”
11. Our Lord quoted this Scripture in Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7. When I conduct a wedding, I always quote it at the end of the marriage ceremony.
12. What we have here every time is a command for a man to cleave to his wife, and in each case there is also a command to leave his mother and father.
13. Children are told throughout Scripture to be subject to their parents. The fifth commandment is found in Exodus 20:12, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

14. Our Lord quoted the fifth commandment in Matthew 15:4, “For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”
15. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”
16. Colossians 3:20 says, “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”
17. The Bible teaches over and over again that children are under the authority of the parents. This changes when a child leaves his mother and father to move out and get married.
18. Some people will agree with most of what I have said so far, but will object to the idea that parents should have any involvement in their child’s choice of a mate.
19. Would they agree that parents have more wisdom and experience than their children?
20. Would they agree that parents can often see things a young person may not see?
21. Would they agree a young person should not consider marrying someone without their parents’ blessing?
22. In I Corinthians 7:36-38, the apostle Paul clearly states that a Christian father has the God-given authority and responsibility to give his daughter into marriage or to “keep” her at home if he prefers.
23. The point here is that the father has the authority to give his daughter’s hand in marriage. Both the OT and the NT teach this.

CONCLUSION:

1. I believe any method of dating or courtship must be analyzed in light of Scripture.
2. Most young people (at least in America) today find it hard to imagine any other path to marriage except through the worldly dating system.
3. I can understand that because it has been presented to us as the “normal” method of selecting a mate. However, a honest observer would have to acknowledge that the current dating system is a far cry from what we see in the Bible.

4. There has been a gradual but severe degeneration of the original courtship method taught in the Bible. Like with so many other things, Christians have gotten caught up in it.
5. God promises to bless those who faithfully obey His Word. Therefore, I believe we must rely on biblical principles (not worldly principles) to bring the blessings of God to both the courtship and the marriage relationship.

- **PATIENCE WHILE WAITING ON GOD**
- **PRAY FOR GOD'S CHOICE**
- **PROVIDENTIAL LEADING OF GOD**
- **PURITY BEFORE MARRIAGE**
- **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

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