

CHRISTIAN COURTSHIP

Christian courtship has often been discussed in God's Kingdom. Most recently, this was the topic for a youth discussion at the Winter Services in Phoenix. It is such an important matter that the Holy Spirit has seen it good to address it again here at the Summer Services. By faith we trust and believe that our Heavenly Father will guide us, teach us, and establish us even further on His imperishable Word. Is not this our prayer, dear brothers and sisters?

In the book of Genesis, chapter 2, verse 18, God said: "It is not good that man should be alone." God in His love for His created man saw this need and provided Adam with a help mate. Moses writes, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Thus God has established marriage. It is God's will that what he created would continue and so he commanded Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Thus God has linked procreation to marriage.

Christian courtship should begin with the prayer that God would grant His blessing. It should begin only with the purpose and hope of a lasting marriage. Christian courtship is such a serious matter that we should avoid foolish matchmaking, and excessive teasing. It is good to be thoughtful and considerate as to not interfere in the lives of fellow travelers in faith. In the world courtship or dating is commonly viewed as entertainment or for getting to know many different ones. One is then able to choose wisely that best one. Experimenting with sexual relations and even living together outside of marriage are also widely accepted in our society. According to God's Word this is adultery and adulterers shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). In Christian courtship, sexual relations are not permissible. The sin of adultery results in the loss of faith.

After the fall of Adam and Eve, the enemy of souls continued his evil work. In Genesis 6:2 it is written: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took wives of all which they chose." Jesus referred to this time saying, "They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Matt 24:38) before God destroyed the world with water. It is truly a serious matter when believers look to the world for a spouse. When a believer begins to court an unbeliever and considers an unbeliever for a spouse, it indicates an inward fall.

The Word of God teaches in 11 Cor. 6: 14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It is sin. Disobedience will eventually result in shipwreck of faith.

Courtship with unbelievers is not a form of mission work. Anyone who receives the grace of repentance understands through faith that it is entirely the grace work of God. Also, if repentance is made for any other purpose than soul's salvation, it is a false repentance and wrong. Only God is able to draw one into His Kingdom. Luther explains that God calls sinners by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. If there is interest between a new convert and another believer, God's congregation has advised them to wait until the seed of God's Word has had time to take root and the fruits or the repentance are visible. Jesus says in Matthew 13:23 "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it: which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. In this way a new brother or sister in faith is nurtured in the love and fellowship of the believers. As Apostle Peter has written in his second epistle, chapter 3 18: "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Dear young friends in faith, when you feel you want a life's companion, pray to the Heavenly Father. Ask Him to help you and guide you. Ask Him for patience to wait for the appropriate time. Pray after the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus: "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt 26:39). Pray for strength and understanding to accept God's will if He does not provide a mate. In I (Cor 7:7-8. Apostle Paul teaches that it is good to abide even as he that is, unmarried. Those who do not have the responsibilities of family life are able to devote more of their attention to the work of God's Kingdom. It is not a disgrace to remain single. The unmarried are not any less precious before God. Among believers, the single, widows and widowers are carried in the same mutual and forgiving love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is good to be content with our lot in life, knowing we have a far better hope in things to come. Jesus teaches in Luke 10:20 "Rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven."

When considering courtship it is advisable to think of the practical aspects. A good question to begin with is: Am I really ready to get married, establish and support a home and family? This is especially true for young people who are in school or college studying and preparing for their future. There are very serious responsibilities involved. Sober thinking and caution are certainly in order. When courtship does begin, the best and most precious advice is found in God's Kingdom "which is the pillar and ground of truth" (I Tim 3:15). Getting to know

one another in the company of believers is advisable to resist temptation. Avoid long moments alone. In mutual honesty, acknowledge that flesh and blood is indeed flesh and blood. Luther says that when hay and flame come together, there is a disaster. Apostle Paul advises in I Thes. 5:22 "to abstain from all appearance of evil." Dear young brother and sister, careless courtship and disobedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit will certainly result in deadly wounds of the conscience. It is truly worthwhile to be mindful of these matters and to begin marriage on a pure and wholesome foundation. Mutual faith and love are the indescribable gifts of God unto man and woman. They are preserved at the throne of grace, to which sinners are invited. It is here in the midst of God's Kingdom where the voice of the blood of our Lord and Saviour yet speaks. Believe even now the forgiveness of all journey faults and sins in Jesus' Holy Name and Precious Blood.

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