

THE RULES FOR DATING/COURTING: PART III

In the first two installments of our series, *The Rules For Dating/Courtship*, we discussed that we must:

I. Set a course for purity.

II. Have a strong personal devotional life.

III. Submit to authority in dating/courtship.

This week we want to discuss the need to...

IV. Be spiritually matched.

Man is made in the image of God. Our Lord is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Man is body, soul and spirit. In today's secular world, many train the youth to focus on the body. How sad that young people, living in the richest country under God's sun, die from anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Our youth are starving to death because they believe their bodies will not be attractive. They honestly believe that love is found in the physical attraction. Go into most any bookstore and you will see shelves lined with self-help books dedicated to the improvement of the personality or what we should say is soul. Yet, for the Christian, we need to be reminded we are foremost spiritual beings. If we are attracted to and begin to get serious with another person based on the bodily or mere soulish (personality) existence, we are existential time bombs. God's agape love does not travel through the body or soul; it travels through the spirit. Love can most certainly be expressed through the body and soul, but the conduit and source comes through the spirit. This is the part of us that communicates with God. *"The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly"* (Proverbs 20:27). Therefore make sure the person you are interested in dating is:

A. Saved

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" II Corinthians 6:14). The person who is not a Christian follows a different voice and their unregenerate nature is prone to follow unrighteousness. This truth is explained in Ephesians 2:2, *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."* By nature of their new birth, the children of God follow another law of life. Their worldview is not molded by the Holy Spirit who lives and

resides in their heart and life: *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).*

Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).* Earlier in this chapter our Lord said, *“And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:5).* When a regenerate person lives under the same roof in marriage with an unregenerate person, they are quite literally living with a stranger. They listen to a different voice. The compatibility will be a struggle at best, a war at worst. It is important to realize that God forbids His people to marry unbelievers.

B. Separated

“Wherefore come out from among the, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (II Corinthians 6:17). *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).* Just because someone has professed faith and is a member of a good Bible-believing church, is not reason enough to decide to date him or her. *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7)* Paul later said, *For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (I Corinthians 3:3).* The carnal or flesh controlled mind is going to cause strife and divisions. It matters not if the young man or woman you are interested in has a great personality or is beautiful or handsome; they need to be separated from this cosmos or world system. *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).*

C. Serving

God’s goal is for you marry in His will. This will be determined by the salvation and separation test. There is yet one more test to pass that is vital and that is the service test. One of the best ways of knowing if someone is truly serious about God is if they are serving Christ with all their heart. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).* *“Serve the LORD with gladness...” (Psalm 100:2).* *“No man can serve two masters...” (Matthew 6:24).* *“Then saith Jesus,... Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).*

If you are contemplating courting a certain person and all they are interested in is job advancement, material gain, fashion, social prestige, sports, gaming or the trivia of this world, it is time to ask yourself what is important to you. If the will of God, His pleasure, and His purpose in your life are important to you and not the person with whom you are interested, you are in trouble before you start. Do not become involved until that is settled for them as well as you. If it does not get settled for them, I would take that as

God's way of putting a veto to your marriage. *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33).

Betty Stam did not sense God's timing was at work after she and John, both Moody Bible Institute students, had become serious in their courtship. She broke off their relationship and soon went to China as a missionary. God had been dealing with both of them about mission work; John was not convinced where and when God wanted him to go. A few years later he surrendered and went to minister in China. While in China, without knowing the other's whereabouts, God brought them together again in a way that could not have been coincidental. They picked up their relationship right where they left off and later married. They had a beautiful little girl. When the communists took over Mainland China, even though they knew their lives were in peril for staying and ministering the Gospel, they stayed. They were captured and both beheaded for their faithfulness to Christ. The tender care of John to Betty in the last hours of their lives was one of the most moving stories told to the church. By the grace and goodness of God, their baby was not found by the enemies and she survives as far as I know to this day. Their exemplary lives are examples of Christian youth who waited on the Lord and made sure everything was in order in the matters of salvation, separation and serving before they committed themselves to marriage. These three things are imperative if we are to be spiritually matched.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

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