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Rules For Dating/Courtship, Part IV

In the first three installments of our series, *Rules For Dating*, 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.
- IV. Be Spiritually Matched.

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

V. Behave appropriately during the courtship/dating experience.

A. Be holy.

As Christians, we make a huge mistake when we try to compartmentalize our life by dividing the secular from the spiritual. At what time do we stop behaving spiritually? *“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord...”* (Romans 14:8). *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”* (I Corinthians 10:31). Let us adhere to a few guidelines:

1. Abstain from physical contact.

When I met my wife Barbara, my life was totally dedicated unto the Lord. As I sought God’s face concerning my conduct when with a member of the opposite sex, God spoke to my heart not to do anything that would lend itself to arousal. This is why when our church young people are out together, we do not permit kissing, arms around each other, hand-holding or sitting too close. This is not because it is not pleasant, because it most certainly is – it is because we want this to be saved for marriage. *“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth...”* (Song of Solomon 1:7). True love starts in the soul. Physical contact can confuse by mistaking sexual stimulation with true agape love. When some young people (who are physical) have said they are “in love,” I remind them they may rather be “in heat.” Three times in Song of Solomon these words are given: *“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please”* (Song of Solomon 8:4; 2:7; 3:5). Scholarship says this a referral to refusing to receive anything that would purposely stir you sexually before your marriage. God uses less abstract language when He says in the New Testament: *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”* (Hebrews 13:4).

2. Do not talk intimately with one another before marriage.

Many times even the language between two people who have developed strong feelings for each other may step into inappropriateness. *“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”* (Colossians 4:6). *“For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret”* (Ephesians 5:12).

3. Be a witness in your courtship.

Let others see Jesus in the way you court! One young lady was impressed that one of the most popular young men in her high school asked her out for a date. The date he asked her to was a school dance. She thought she could justify going to a dance with this boy provided she would be a witness. While on the dance floor, the young lady asked the young man, "Are you a Christian?" He replied in a shocking tone, "No are you?" She quickly answered, "Yes, I am." To her embarrassment he then asked, "Then what are you doing here?" It is an amazing truth - many people in the world have higher standards for Christians than some Christians have for themselves.

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "...*He shall testify of me*" (John 15:26). Let us allow the Spirit of God to have a clear testimony of Jesus by being the clean vessel through which He flows. "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...to keep himself unspotted from the world*" (James 1:27).

B. Be balanced.

Don't spend too much time with the person with whom you are courting/dating. If you are presently involved in courtship, it won't be long before you marry and, God willing, spend the majority of your life with that person. The few days you have left with Mom and Dad are numbered. In your youth, you need to learn to divide your time in such a way that you include fellowship with your parents. Glean from their wisdom before you marry. This can really help in the adjustment period after marriage. If you have siblings, learn to understand them. They can teach you much about unselfishness and how to get along with people, again complementing the early marriage and serving as a shock absorber in preparation for marriage. If a young person may put up with an annoying brother, they will be well adjusted to take on idiosyncrasies of their spouse in marriage. This goes for sisters as well.

Familiarity may either breed contempt or inappropriate familiarity. It is my opinion that there is far too much cell phone, texting, emailing, blogging and facebook activity in young people's lives. I know of one young couple who spent over ten hours on the cell phone one day in their early courtship. Oh, by the way, they are no longer an item. The very things that you believe are getting you closer can be the very things that tear you apart.

One of most important activities of our day is making a conscious, deliberate effort to walk with God. If we let time with our girlfriend or boyfriend invade our time with God, this is nothing short of idolatry. "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*" (I John 5:21). "*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*" (Colossians 1:18). If any courtship/dating relationship takes us away from time in prayer, Bible and church, we are heading down the wrong direction. Enjoy your courtship, but be balanced.

C. Be in the company of other Christians.

In the early days of America, the young man would come calling. This consisted of remaining in the company of her parents while they ate, sat on the porch or took a walk. They were always within eyeshot and earshot of accountability.

The benefit of a good Bible-believing, separated youth group is that you are surrounded by a protocol that is conducive to right behavior. While our four kids were dating we did not permit them to date alone. It was not until after they were engaged that we would even permit them to ride in the automobile together and then it was understood what time they would leave point "A" and when they

would arrive at point “B.” And we made sure their parents were at home. If the parents retire for the evening, so does the courtship activity. The date is over.

If you ask, “What’s wrong, don’t you trust dating couples?” The answer is simply and emphatically, “No!” Paul said, “*For we...worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (Philippians 3:3).

I need to make a concluding point. Our kids were not perfect and neither were their parents, but everybody needs rules while dating. There will be occasions, and in our family there were occasions, when rules were broken. We incorporated disciplinary action and kept loving them. The truth is, human nature needs Spirit-led guidelines. I would rather keep the standard high, knowing that there will be a falling, but not, as a rule as severe a falling than if we keep a low standard or worse yet, no standard. My prayer for the membership of Christchurch and readers throughout the world is that you all would have godly homes. We are far more likely to achieve this goal if we start our homes in the right way, which means we begin with rightness with God and bring this into our marriage.

- Pastor Pope -

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