

Courtship or Dating, Part 2: Loving and Honoring Authority

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Introduction:

- God's Word is sufficient for all of life and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16-17, Psalm 19, 119). It may not use some of the modern terms we use, but it uses principles that always apply to all people for all time
- The focus of this study is not methodology or terminology (some have different connotations of words or different applications of Scripture), but the way I am using terms is stated below to clarify

Definition of Terms:

Recreational Dating – 20th century Western cultural, casual, or recreational “going out,” generally as follows:

- often begins among young, teen school-children nowhere near marriage and with no intent of marriage (up to 10 yrs or so before average marrying age) for fun, feelings, fulfilling youth's desires
- based largely on outward attraction, and if interest is mutual, the two may quickly skip friendship stage to boyfriend / girlfriend stage or “going steady” relationships which can consume life, energies, focus, time (taking him / her away from family, serving, church, etc.), often idolatrously
- typically young adult to adulthood journey includes a series of romantic relationships, most of which are with someone else's future spouse (since most of these don't end in marriage)
- varying levels of emotional awakening and stirring of passions and feelings and giving of hearts and sharing intimate expressions verbally and eventually often physically (kissing, “making out,” caressing, sometimes even further sexually) with consequences including significant emotional and spiritual toll upon the young people when such relationships come to an end
- frequently seeks and savors some degree of the privileges of marriage without its covenant commitment or *agape* love that dies to self rather than pleases self, and seeks the other's best interest
- guided mostly by self, youth cultural norms and expectations, and with little to no parental involvement, insight, oversight, approval or even advice sought early and during the relationship, though at least meeting and minimally interacting with father and family may occur, often after the couple already has progressed romantically, emotionally, perhaps even physically to some degree
- eventually when (if?) a young man settles down to commit to his serious girlfriend, and is at or near marriageable age and the next stage of life, he prepares to propose, and the girl's parents finally at this point may be informed of his intentions right before engagement, as he may ask for their blessing to marry. ‘In the case of parental objection, the couple should still try to have a planned and public wedding and should attempt to win the parents over and have them attend the wedding and at least give ... token approval’ --Lloyd Saxton (unbeliever), *The Individual, Marriage, and the Family*
- with little to no input from godly mentors or church leaders sought previously, as the couple makes arrangements for the wedding, final plans include finding a pastor so they can get married, leaving a little time for premarital counseling as a formality since some pastors require it to perform a wedding

Christian Courtship or Dating Biblically – a mature relationship of man and woman both under the headship of Christ and the daughter especially under the loving headship (provision, protection) of her father until given by him at a wedding, at which point her covenant headship and loving leadership is transferred to her husband:

1. **passionately in love above all else with God's Son**
2. **parentally involved among God's people**
3. **purposefully considering marriage for God's glory**
4. **principle driven by God's Word**
5. **purity guarding for God's best** (last 3 will be considered further in future parts of sermon series)

Biblical Starting Point:

Romans 12 (NIV) ¹ *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* ² **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Loving and Honoring Authority (as illustrated in the book of Ruth and taught throughout God's Word):

- I. *Loving and honoring the authority of the Lord and His Word is the most important starting point***
 - a. The LORD is over all, working through all, and in all, and must be acknowledged above all**
 - i. Illustrated in Naomi (Ruth 1:3-13)
 - ii. Illustrated in Boaz (Ruth 2:4a, 12, 3:10-13) and other godly people (2:4b, 4:11-15)
 - iii. Instructed in Scripture (Prov. 3:5-6; Ps. 37:4)
 - iv. Implications from Scripture:
 1. A high view of God, His sovereignty / attributes is critical for your life or mate
 2. Don't misuse "the will of God" or "God told me" (Deut. 18:20; 1 Thess. 4:3-8)
 - b. The LORD must be loved above all**
 - i. Illustrated (Ruth 1:16, 2:11-12); Instructed in Scripture (Matt. 10:37-38, 22:36-38)
 - ii. Implications from Scripture:
 1. This must be your pre-eminent and consuming passion, not any other relationship affections/desires (Col. 3:5 "*inordinate affection...covetousness is idolatry*" KJV)
 2. Seek a mate who loves the Lord and helps you to (1 Cor 7:39, 16, 9:5; 2 Cor 6:14)
 3. Invest single years serving Christ, content in Him (1 Cor. 7:32-35; Phil. 4:11-13)
 - c. The LORD's Word must be followed above all**
 - i. Illustrated in Ruth and Boaz seeking relationship in biblical bounds (3:9, 12-13, chap. 4)
 - ii. Instructed in Scripture (Ps 1; 119:9-11, 97-105)
 - iii. Implications from Scripture: *traditions or teaching on dating/courting bow to Scripture*
- II. *The LORD's authority is honored by youth honoring parents and other God-ordained authorities***
 - a. Biblically the protective authority over a daughter until marriage is her father normally**
 - i. Illustrated in Boaz's question (2:5-6) and Ruth's unusual position (2:8-9, 16, 19, 22-23)
 - ii. Instructed in Scripture (Eph. 6:1-4, Eph. 5:22-24, 28-29; 1 Cor. 11:3)
 - iii. Implications from Scripture:
 1. Sons leave parents and marry and become head of a new family (Eph. 5:31, 23)
 2. Daughters in contrast are "given in marriage" by fathers (Lk. 17:26-27, 20:34-35) who may choose to give or not give his daughter to a man (1 Cor. 7:36-37) even if she is already quite involved and/or intimate with the guy (Exodus 22:16-17)
 3. The head of the household may overrule the woman's commitments (Num. 30:3-16) and should protect her purity / honor (Dt. 22:13-21, Eph. 5:25-27, Heb. 13:4). The picture of Father giving a pure bride is rooted not in earthly culture but God's eternal covenant plan (Gen 2:22, Rev 21:9-11; Jn 6:37, 39, 17:2, 6, 9, 12, 24, 26)
 4. The father of the unmarried daughter should be sought out and submitted to (Gen. 24:15-28), considering her wishes (v. 57-58), dad should get to know a young man first (Ex. 2:16-21) and set the parameters for their relationship (Gen. 29:9-20, 34:11-12), and be honored during relationship before and after marriage (Ex. 4:18-20, 18:7-27) but fathers should be wise and biblical (Judges 21, Gen. 31:5-7)
 - b. God's Word recognizes there is not always a father in the picture or other ideals, but the principle should still be followed of honoring parental or other godly authorities that exist**
 - i. Illustrated in Ruth's situation (widow far away from home, former family background and upbringing was pagan, Moab known for Chemosh cult of child-sacrifice, etc.)
 - ii. Illustrated in Ruth's loyal love (1:8) and faithful submissive honoring attitude to Naomi who didn't always have an honorable attitude (1:19-22, 2:2, 11, 18, 22-23, 3:6, 16, 4:16)
 - iii. Illustrated in Boaz honoring Naomi as Ruth's only remaining parental authority (3:15-18)
 - iv. Instructed in Scripture (Eph. 6:3; Prov. 1:8, 6:20)
 - v. Implications from Scripture:
 1. Single moms may be recognized as heads of households (Acts 16:15; Num 30:9)
 2. Moms and other family members may be involved (Gen. 21:20-21, 24:28-32)
 3. Godly believers and leaders in the church should be involved prior to marriage as well as after (Lk 1:39-56; Titus 2:2-8; 1 Pet. 5:5, Heb. 10:24-25, 13:7, 17)