

Courtship or Dating, Part 3: Parental Protection from the Dating Game

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Introduction

The picture from Ruth 2 illustrates the unique plight of a young lady without the protection or provision of a man. The biblical norm is godly male headship, loving leadership that protects; normally fathers, then husbands.

Women's liberation as a movement largely has attempted to "free" women from all such authority as young adult daughters, to be independent feminists who don't need a man and are so much better off on their own. But actually biblical truth protects women and promotes godly femininity. God's truth is what truly sets free.

Definition of Biblical Masculinity and Femininity (source: *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*)

At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent [loving] responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships

At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships

1 Cor. 11:3 *I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and **the man is the head of a woman***

Under the loving authority and headship of Christ, a woman is designed by God for the loving authority and headship of a Christ-like man. A father is the authority and head of his household (his wife and his children), to exercise loving leadership in providing, protecting, and if and when he gives his daughter in marriage to a man, biblically what is taking place in the wedding ceremony is that mantle of headship (loving, leading, providing, protecting) is transferred from the girl's father to her husband. That's the normal biblical pattern (a beautiful pattern) but Ruth is in a unique situation as a widow, with no father or male in her life, but as she models and honors that abiding definition of femininity, and as she honors and loves the parent she does have (in Naomi), she is blessed, and it goes well with her, as Scripture promises, not because the exact midnight method on the threshing floor was or is how all should do it, but because she loved and honored authority (Eph 6:1-4, 5:22-24)

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 (this is from last week's outline)

- 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, see also 1 Sam. 15:23)
- 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)

Rick Holland writes:

'One of the most neglected sources of wisdom in the Christian life is church leaders. Pastors, elders, deacons, and other leaders should be intricately involved in any budding relationship. This is especially important if the parents are deceased, far away, or out of the picture for other reasons. It is a curious fact that more is said in the [N.T.] about the role of church leaders in our lives than even the role of our parents (see Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus; Hebrews 13). Only a fool would disregard this arm of God's authority ... the book of Proverbs exhorts us to listen to wise counsel around us (see 12:15; 15:22; 19:20-21; 27:9).

The insights and observations of mature Christian friends should add yet another layer of accountability in relational decisions ... And the counsel of other mature believers can also be used by God to put the relationship under the microscope ... [a couple] should move forward in the relationship only after they have exhausted the confirmation possible from their parents, pastors, and friends.’ (“The Guided Path,” in *Paths to the Love of your Life*, edited by Alex Chediak).

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).

Doug Wilson writes on Num 30:3-6 (*Her Hand in Marriage, Biblical Courtship in the Modern World*, p. 21-22)

‘if such authority rests with the father or the husband concerning a vow made *to the Lord*, how much more does it apply to other issues? And how much more will it apply to such things as a commitment a daughter might make to an interested suitor? A vow a woman makes the Lord would be the most solemn and weighty of all vows. If her father or husband can set this kind of vow aside, then he certainly has authority to set aside other lesser vows ... in Scripture, sons *leave* home, daughters are *given*. This is the scriptural pattern. A son leaves in order to take a wife, and establish a new home. A daughter is given to a young man who is establishing such a home ... She remains under the authority of her father – even if she is physically away from home – and then when she is given in marriage, she comes under the authority of her husband. This is the normal scriptural pattern ... The authority of a father therefore clearly extends to a daughter’s romantic interests.’

Exodus 22:16 If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife.¹⁷ **If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins.**

‘The father of the daughter [decides to give or not give a daughter in marriage] – not the daughter, not the seducer, not true love, not Hollywood decides. Mundane old Dad makes the decision. Now obviously the daughter had seen something in this young man. But the father may not have seen it, or perhaps he did see it, but had a different opinion of it ... Now if the father has the authority to say *no* when there is an *existing* sexual relationship, then how much more does the father have the authority to say *no* when there is nothing more than mild emotional or sexual interest? If he may say *no* when a couple have gone ten miles down the road, then how much more may he say *no* if they have gone fifty yards? ... The idea that a young girl could say, “I’m eighteen and I can do what I want” would have been alien to the biblical way of thinking. In other words, the father has *legitimate* biblical authority ... With recreational dating, the authority of the father is treated as a vestige of another era, or as a joke. The task before us here is consequently for fathers to begin thinking of themselves in a biblical way. The disrespect that children have for their fathers in this area is really just an echo of the disrespect fathers have of their own office ... With recreational dating, some degree of sexual activity is expected so long as they don’t “go all the way,” and those responsible for holding the line are the couple themselves – which usually means that the woman is the one who bears the brunt of the responsibility ... With recreational dating, the privacy of the couple is paramount.’ (Wilson, 29-32)

But with Christian courtship (or dating biblically or whatever you want to call it), the purity of a couple is paramount. We’ll look at that subject more next week Lord-willing, which is one of the most beautiful themes in Scripture from the very beginning of the Bible to the very end of the Bible, the glory of a father presenting a pure bride (the heavenly eternal reality we are to reflect here on earth). The picture of a 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, Eph. 5:27-32)