

## Courtship & Marriage article 8

Dear Young People,

By this time you should have read and studied chapters 1 & 2 of *Leaving Father and Mother*. If you have any questions that rise out of your study of these chapters or of anything I write, be sure to send them to me.

We are going to continue our discussion of dating in this letter.

I want to say a bit more about the fact that some boys are not eager to date and seem, in fact, to be uninterested in girls. I talked about this in my last letter, but there is one more thing that needs to be said.

In our societies, both here in the States and in Singapore, it is customary for the boy to take the initiative, and it is considered forward and rude for a girl to ask a boy for a date. I think as a general rule, girls tend to be more spiritual than boys. This is not, of course, true in every case, but, sadly, it is frequently so. It was also so in Bible times and God often raised up godly women who, for the love of God's covenant, deserved mention in sacred Scripture. I think of Rebekah, who was willing to go from her home in Haran all the way to Palestine to marry a young man whom she had never seen, knowing that she would never see her family again. I think of Rahab the harlot who was ready to risk her life to become a part of Israel. To that list can be added many more. Ruth was willing to leave her country and home to go with her widowed mother-in-law to be a part of the nation of Israel. And, besides leaving her home and family in Moab she had to teach Boaz, an Israelite who should have known better, his covenant obligations. Deborah had to be a prophetess because no men in Israel were spiritual enough to do the job; and she had to go with Barak to fight against the enemy, because Barak was too frightened to go alone. Hannah was one who wanted a son so badly that she promised God to dedicate him to the service of the tabernacle, but whose husband was not sufficiently spiritual to understand that Hannah wanted a child so she could be a part of bringing forth Christ. Then there was Jehoshephat, who hid the royal son Josiah when wicked Athaliah killed all the royal seed – and risked her own life. Where were the men? Busy earning their living, I guess. It took women to do what men ought to have done.

Maybe our custom is to have young men take the initiative, and maybe that is for the good. But that does not mean that young ladies may not try to persuade indifferent boys to notice them and ask them for a date. I remind you of the sermon Rev. Hoeksema preached on I Peter 3:1-6. He made the point that girls are often more interested in marriage than young men. That is why young girls may make themselves pretty to attract young men. But he meant too that girls are frequently more spiritual than boys.

But having said all that, the fact remains that the purpose of dating is to find a husband or a wife. Boys must not, primarily, be attracted to girls because they are very pretty and shapely. Nor ought girls be attracted to boys who are strong and handsome with broad shoulders and bulging muscles. Outward appearance does not count. It is

certainly true that the bold and forward boys who can laugh and joke, create fun and appear worldly-wise are attractive to girls. And boys are often attracted by a swirling skirt, or a pretty face. But God does not look at outward appearances; He looks at the heart.

When we in our dating are looking for a husband or a wife, our chief concern ought to be: Will he make a good father for my children? A mother for my children? Will he be busy in the church? A wife who is concerned for the truth of Scripture and full of good works for her family and fellow saints? Is this man godly? Is this young girl a spiritual woman? Is this man more interested in the welfare of the church than in earning a large salary? Is this young woman satisfied with a modest house and a life of financial sacrifice when it is for the cause of God's kingdom? Those are the questions that need asking.

A beautiful and curvaceous young lady will not be that way any more when she is sixty. A handsome young man may be disfigured in an accident that is not his fault. Will those things make any difference to you in your love for your spouse? Do you mean it if in your marriage vows you say what is common in our churches, that you promise to love your spouse "for better or for worse, till death us do part?"

Our marriage form used in our churches begins with the words: "Whereas married couples are, generally, by reason of sin, subject to many troubles and afflictions. . . ." Young girls planning their weddings and have asked me to marry them, have said to me, "Will you change that first line of the Marriage Form? It is so pessimistic. It speaks of troubles and afflictions, and we want this to be a happy occasion." I tell them that it is better not to change it, for it is reality. In the world trouble often drives married people apart; in the church it ought to drive them more closely together, and if they have the love for each other that is rooted in love for God, affliction will drive them closer together.

I have often stood with a young couple in front of the altar of marriage. They were serious and godly young people, and although they were very happy, they were solemn as well, for they knew that great responsibilities lay ahead of them, and that the Lord might be pleased to send them many afflictions.

But this letter is long enough.

With warmest greetings,

Prof Hanko