

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS
"Part VIII: Renewing Household Marital Courtships: Renewed Courting For Women"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) All the challenges that **men** face in dating, **women** face from their own viewpoint:

(a) Like men, women face the health challenge of meeting healthy partners of the opposite sex where one million Americans already have the AIDS virus, and where 63% of all people under age 25 have sexually transmitted diseases (U. S. Dept. of Health and Human Services 1991 annual report, p. 13).

(b) Like men, women face marriage in a culture where half of all weddings performed this year will end in the crisis of divorce! Just **finding** let alone **marrying** the right partner a high risk venture.

(c) Like men, women face the **spiritual** challenge of finding a suitable partner even in *Evangelical* churches where, according to national authority Josh McDowell, half of all teens have had premarital sex!

(2) However, **women** face additional **challenges** due to their gender and our culture as follows:

(a) Brian Pappas' questionnaire sent out last year from his dating service, Together in Farmington hints at a **cultural** hurdle women face in dating. The question of note in that circular reads: "Are you tired of all the **wrong men** approaching you, and having to say, '**no thank you**' and the man you would really like to meet **never** approaches?" Our culture expects "nice girls" not to go on the aggressive to initiate a date. They have to sit back and hope Mr. "Right" sometime gets struck with the idea take proper notice of them!

(b) Another problem is the "biological clock" issue mentioned in a recent Hollywood movie. A young woman desperate to get her boyfriend to marry her is pictured in a dramatic scene, standing on a cabin porch while he lazily sits indoors. While her arms are folded, she stamps her foot in frustration, calling out to him, "My biological clock is tick, tick, ticking away!" Women have a limited time frame in which to bear children, adding more pressure to courting.

Is there any guidance for a young woman regarding dating and meeting Mr. "Right" at the right TIME and right WAY?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section as follows . . .)

Need: "*Besides what MEN face in courting, WOMEN have a short time frame for bearing children and must deal with the notion that 'nice girls' let MEN initiate courting! Does GOD offer any ideas?!*"

- I. **When God made marriage, it was *fulfilling* for women: in shaping its lasting, heterosexual and monogamous features, He *thoughtfully* made a man for Eve *before* she existed and *warmly* escorted her as "Father of the Bride" to him, *thereby AIDING* her *emotionally, mentally* and so *physically* to gain a NURTURING (hence *easy*) trek through courtship to marriage and motherhood, Gen. 2:19-25.**
- II. **Yet, sin ruined a woman's marital fulfillment: it produced a loss of spousal *intimacy* (Gen. 3:7), spousal *emotional withdrawal* (Gen. 3:11-12) and eventual male spousal *relational distancing*, Gen. 4:19.**
- III. **In view of sin's painful effects on women, Solomon, with his broad marital experience was used by God to offer insight for them:**
 - A. Solomon had **700 wives** and **300 mistresses** (1 Kings 11:3) and had the means to support this living arrangement, 1 Kings 10:14-29.
 - B. However, after **attempting** this arrangement, Solomon concluded that it was unfulfilling, a mere "chasing after the wind" (NIV), Eccl. 2:1-11.
 - C. In fact, **Solomon** claimed that a woman should live **fulfilled** with the **SAME** man she **first** married **throughout** life, Pr. 5:18f with S/S 8:6-7.
 - D. Accordingly, Solomon suggested the following for **unmarried** women:
 1. **Fact One** - If a woman **starts** relating to men by **first** respecting God, she will build a stable base for dating and marriage, Prov. 1:7. Updating this from the N.T., she should accept Christ as Savior (Jn. 3:16) and fellowship with God, 1 Jn. 1:9; Ga. 5:16-23; 1 Jn. 2:3-6.
 2. **Fact Two** - All voluntary premarital sexual arousal hinders later marital fulfillment, S/S 1:6; 4:12, 15; 8:6 with 8:9; also, immorality brings on God's discipline, Prov. 5:20-23; thus, she should refrain from all such activity **until marriage** via God's power, Ga. 5:16-23.
 3. **Fact Three** - A maid is **vulnerable** to a man's **slightest courting advance**, but **quicker** than **he** to sense **his BEING attracted TO** her.* Thus, she should use this "early detection" instinct to avoid **eye contact** with such a man **BEFORE dating him** until she **clears** his qualifications for **potential marriage**. We explain as follows:
 - a. The numerical proverb of Pr. 30:18-19 with its x and x+1 theme pattern stresses the final x+1 item as the "**culmination** . . . of its **preceding** items," Bib. Know. Com., O.T., p. 970, 917.

- b. Thus, Pr. 30:18f (NIV & Hebrew) teaches a maid is vulnerable to a "man-at-the-height-of-his-male-power's" ("*gever*") *smooth, mysterious, effective* wooing by *eye contact* (the eagle off in the sky = **sight**), by *touch* (the way of a serpent *on* the rock) and by *sexual union* (a ship *on-AND-in* the "**high**" (*aroused*) seas).
 - c. Since the emphasis is on a suitor's *continuous* control, a maid is captive to his influence *once* she has accepted his **eye contact!**
 - d. Thus, a *maid* is wise to **INTERRUPT EVEN a suitor's EYE contact** to sidestep being *irreversibly led* into marriage **UNTIL** she's checked to see that he is a suitable **POTENTIAL HUSBAND!**
 - e. *Now, to **INTERRUPT** a suitor's *eye contact*, a maid can use her "*early detection*" instinct: *new findings show that a woman quickly senses a man's infatuation as her mind deductively sifts all data in her environs to draw swift generalizations; men think more inductively and so are relationally slower* (Dr. Dobson). A maid can then detect a man's liking her before he can act as a suitor, giving her time to decide IF she will let him charm her!
4. Fact Four - So, if a maid's "early detection" instinct signals a suitor exists, she can stall having eye contact to do a background check:
- a. *Before* ever **meeting** men, she has sought the advice of *both* her parents on the **kind** of man to *date*, let alone **wed**, Pr. 6:20-24.
 - b. When a suitor comes around, she checks if he qualifies as a **potential spouse**: besides (1) her *own* desires, he must display (2) **selfless protection** and (3) **nurture** toward women and (4) have the ability to **provide for** her, Ep. 5:22ff. (5) With Prov. 1:7 & 2 Cor. 6:14, he **must** be a godly Christian!
5. Fact Five - Lest a woman feel there can be **no** such qualified man come around *in time* for her to have a family, consider these items:
- a. If a virgin woman living before the Church is raptured does **not** have the gift of celibacy, according to the **will of God**, she **should marry**, 1 Cor. 7:2, 8-11, 36 with 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2.
 - b. This being so, against all odds, **God must** provide a spouse to defend this directive, and Gen. 24:1-67 is proof God **can** do so.

Lesson Application: *As a virgin maid seeking Biblical fulfillment in marriage, (1) begin with faith in Christ and fellowship with God (Jn. 3:16; Gal. 5:16-23; 1 Jn. 2:3-6). Follow up by (2) trusting God's promises to provide a qualified spouse. (3) Then, accept even courting EYE contact ONLY with one whom Scripture indicates could be the future spouse, thereby starting an edifying courtship!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Years ago, a young, unmarried nurse in her 20s named Sherril who attended a church I pastored worked in the Atkinson, Nebraska hospital where Nadine delivered our son, Greg. She had a long talk with Nadine in the night shift hours after Greg had been born about her deep longing to have her **own** baby one day. She really wanted to get married and have a family. However, she was already out of college, into a nursing career, and it seemed that a married life was just going to pass her by. That bothered her, making her feel she was missing the "brass ring" of real fulfillment as a woman!

By way of Nadine's conversation with her and through my more indirect sermon emphases, we urged Sherril to trust the Lord's leading. If she did not have the gift of celibacy, then God would have to supply her a marriage partner and gratify her desire to bear her own children.

It wasn't long before Sherril met a nice man and started to date. In the process, she learned that he had been divorced, and she knew from our teachings on 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 that she could not please the Lord by marrying a man who had been divorced from someone else.

She struggled with what to do. She knew that this man might personify her last chance for marriage as she was getting on into her late 20s. Finally, in faith, she chose to obey the Lord's Word, trusting that **He** knew what was best for her no matter what happened!

Sherril then met a wonderful, Biblically eligible man named Gary. After they fell madly in love, he proposed, she accepted, and I was privileged to perform their wedding ceremony. That was in 1984.

After we left that Church and had come to Nepaug, we heard that Sherril had given birth to several healthy children -- her **own!**

Though she attended our small assembly of 35 people with limited Biblically qualified suitors available in the area at the time, and with her biological clock ticking away ever so steadily, God who knows all of our needs and supplies them Himself met Sherril's needs and desires for bearing her own children when she took them in faith and obedience to Him!

God will provide what we need -- just trust and obey Him!