

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

"Part X: Renewing Household Marital Courtships: Addressing Roadblocks - Overcoming Past Courting Abuses"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) When it comes to addressing less-than-ideal premarital courting experiences, one is inundated by examples around us:

(a) Ann Landers reported in the Feb. 28, '97 issue of The Boston Globe that ((a)) over 25% of college-age women surveyed by the American Medical Association have been the victim of rape or attempted rape, and that mostly by men already known by them. She reported that ((b)) 51 percent of 11-to 14-year-old boys and 41 percent of the same aged girls "said forced sex was acceptable if the boy 'spent a lot of money' on the girl."

(b) Sharon A Sheehan in the July 13, '92 issue of Newsweek reported that when she worked for the State of California to solve teen-age pregnancy by teaching birth control, her overseer told her to try eradicating her students' sense of shame over having premarital sex so that they would use condoms. She admitted: "I felt compelled to imply that all sexual choices are morally neutral. Thus everything I've learned from my marriage . . . Everything I believe about how meaningful relationships are formed was irrelevant."

(2) However, the problem hits Evangelicals hard as well:

(a) Noted Evangelical leader, Josh McDowell reports that over half of all Evangelical teens have had premarital sex.

(b) When we had our Church School at Nepaug, a parent of a daughter attending our school complained to me personally about the conduct of many boys from "churched" families on dates.

(c) I have counseled with men who secretly carry gnawing personal guilt over past abusive behaviors toward those of the opposite gender while dating or courting or even in marriage itself.

(d) I have counseled with women with their husbands or who come in with other women who testify of guilt or deep hurts at men because of suffering astounding intimate abuses by them.

Cost of difficulties in the courting process become staggering.

In view of the problem of smudged courting records where hurts, guilt and even hate exist, is there any chance for renewal?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Though IDEALLY one should keep himself from taking unjust advantage of another or from being abused or hurt while courting, the REALITY is often sadly, painfully different! Can the slate be wiped clean of the past so that we can start over anew?!"

I. The way God DESIGNED Adam and Eve, their COURTING experience was meant to BOND them FOREVER in deep love:

- A. God created Adam and Eve and led her to Adam when both were unclothed, and **God Himself** viewed any resulting courtship activity as "very **good** (Hebrew *tov* = **wholesome**)", Gen. 1:27, 31a; 2:19-25.
- B. Under the Spirit's inspiration (2 Pet. 1:21), Solomon supplied insight from which we can surmise was their **ideal** courtship steps as follows:
 1. A **wholesome** Adam is attracted to a **wholesome** Eve, and she notices this by her "early detection system" before Adam knows she knows it (cf. III, D in our "Courting for Women" sermon notes).
 2. Since Adam is acceptable to Eve as a potential **spouse**, she **then** elects to accept Adam's **eye contact** for courting, Prov. 30:18-19.
 3. As she is irresistibly **drawn** by Adam's **eye contact** courting efforts (Pr.30:18-19), next comes mutual lasting commitment (**marriage**).
 4. Then, on their **honeymoon**, Eve signals by body language or word her wish to be **kissed**, and hence **fully aroused** by Adam, S/S 1:2.
 5. Following this, Adam leads Eve to recline for petting (the touch level, Pr. 30:19b) and full arousal and union (a ship **on and in** the **high** seas, Pr. 30:19c), S/S 1:4-8:14 (cf. Song of Solomon notes).
- C. Such courting steps were planned by God to **bond** the pair **forever**:
 1. Since bonding **begins** when a man is first **attracted** to the woman, and **INTENSIFIES** as she **submits** to his courting **eye contact**, only to lead **irrevocably** on to full marital physical union, **nothing** was intended by God to thwart this courting **PROCESS!**
 2. As total arousal and union between the **immortal** bride and groom produces a **bond as strong as death**, S/S 8:6-7, God wanted **courtship** to produce a **bond** to last **forever!** (Mtt. 19:4-6)

II. Well, SIN disrupted this courtship process, creating CHAOS:

- A. When Adam and Eve sinned, they felt shame at their mutual physical nakedness and created aprons to hide from one another, Gen. 3:6-7.

- B. This shame came from eating the fruit of the tree of the **knowledge** of *good AND evil*, Gen. 3:5; 2:17.
- C. Well, since **nakedness** was not *innately* evil as God *created* Adam and Eve that way and **then introduced** them that way (Gen. 2:22, 25), it was their **knowledge** of what *evil* the **OTHER** partner could do to one's **self** due to the **power** men and women **mutually** have over each *other's bodies* (1 Cor. 7:4) that produced this shame and distancing!
- D. Since *sin* came, men and women have *each* abusively taken selfish advantage of the other out of lust or insecurity: the power one has over the other has been abused repeatedly, rupturing the courtship bonding process with chaotic hurts in many shattered lives!

III. Thus, courting with SECURE, GRATIFYING results can ONLY occur when BOTH a man and woman are CLEANSED from SIN and empowered by God's Spirit to control their SIN NATURES:

- A. Solomon noted that a bride and groom fulfill each other in lovemaking not only via use of hormones, but also by mutual respect, S/S 1:3, 15.
- B. Yet, due to sin, the Gen. 3:7 wall between man and woman still lingers and must be handled by the groom's patience and self-control toward his bride (S/S 1:4-8:14) and the bride's quenching inhibiting distrust to respond to the groom (S/S 1:5-8; 2:15) as **both** take **time** for mutual arousal, S/S 2:7; 3:5; 8:4. Thus, mutual respect is upheld *perpetually*.
- C. Since patience, self-control, selflessness and trust arise from the Spirit's control (Gal. 5:22-23), and since *without* such control only the *opposite* behavior exists (Gal. 5:17-21), everyone must be controlled by the Holy Spirit to *guarantee* success in the whole courting *process*!
- D. Thus, trusting a so-called "innate goodness" in one's *date or spouse or even HIMSELF WILL* frustrate as *all* mortals have sin *natures* (Jer. 17:5-6, 9; 1 Jn. 1:10) and many bear "baggage" of subliminal revenge or paralyzing low self-esteem due to past courting experience failures! Rather, one must have **God** lead one to the *right* date or spouse and see **God** from then on *influence BOTH the date or spouse AND himself* for truly fulfilling courtship **results**, Jer. 17:7-8; Gal. 2:20.
- E. Well, such fulfillment can realistically come **only** (1) by receiving the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:9), then (2) confessing sin as a believer for cleansing (1 Jn. 1:9) and (3) depending upon the Spirit's influence (Gal. 5:16) to (4) obey Scripture *continually*!
- F. As an added **HOPE**, those with "soiled" records **can** "start anew":
 1. Some of the Corinthian believers had miserable courtship experiences before coming to faith in Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 6:9-11a.
 2. Yet, by God's power (1 Cor. 6:11b; Gal. 2:20) they were expected to function well in **marriage**, 1 Cor. 7:2-9.

Lesson Application: *God can "wipe the slate clean" of the damaging effects of one's BEING abused by or having ABUSED in courting events. He does so through Christ & obeying the Scriptures above!*

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

(1) In our introduction, we noted Sharon Sheehan's lament in working for the State of California in teaching birth control in high schools. She had to remove a sense of shame in her presentations so students would use condoms without her being allowed to suggest abstinence as an alternative even to having premarital sex.

But in talking with teens, Sheehan noted that ". . . teen-agers are embarrassed to ask the questions they care about most. 'What should I look for in a mate?' 'How do I know if it's morally right?' 'How will I feel afterward?' Behind their value-free facade lurks a deep sense of loss. They lament the lack of guidelines and moral structure." ("Another Kind of Sex," Reader's Digest, in quoting Newsweek, July 13, 1992)

(2) The May/June issue of Christian American magazine details the testimony of a woman named Leisha.

Her beloved father was killed in an industrial accident when she was 8, and her life turned bitterly sour after that. Her mother, unable to cope with the stress of handling four children under 12, deteriorated into schizophrenia. When her mother brought home boyfriends, they often sexually abused Leisha.

Then, in broad daylight, a man with a gun forced her into the back seat of her car in a busy parking lot amidst her screams and passers-by pretending not to notice, and he repeatedly raped her. One would think Leisha would turn out to be insane from it all.

But she survived because one day she was invited to church and told of the love of Christ. A godly man there publically gave her a big hug with pure Christian warmth, something Leisha had not known as an adult. She recognized it as something genuine and full -- the love coming from the Lord through him. She accepted Christ as her Savior. Now she is happily married to husband Tom and has a son named Alex. Leisha's testimony: "God is bigger than any fear. I own my own business. I travel. I stay in hotels alone. The power of my testimony is that I am functioning well in society, that I should be crazy and I'm not. God healed me because He loves me. And He loves you no less."

Take it from a young woman who should know -- Jesus Christ has the answers for those with skeletons in the closet either from being abused or from abusing in dating or courtship relationships. Jesus Christ can work wonders by His grace!