

THOUGHTS ON DATING AND YOUTHFUL ROMANCES

FOR PARENTS
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

BY THORA EVANS

REFERENCES USED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- **American Standard Version** (ASV or AV) is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. It soon came to have other names such as the American Revised Version, the American Standard Revision, the American Standard Revised Bible, and the American Standard Edition. By the time its copyright was renewed in 1929, it had come to be known by its present name, the American Standard Version.
- **Diaglott** is a two-language polyglot translation, of the New Testament by Benjamin Wilson, first published in 1864. It is an interlinear translation with the original Greek text and a word-for-word English translation in the left column, and a full English translation in the right column.
- **King James Version** (KJV) references are used throughout this publication unless otherwise noted.
- **Revised Version** (RV) (or English Revised Version) of the Bible is a late 19th-century British revision of the King James Version of 1611. It was the first and remains the only officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Bible.
- **Wuest:** Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893–1962) was a noted New Testament Greek (Κοινή) scholar of the mid-20th century...produced his own English translation of the New Testament (the Wuest Expanded Translation – abbreviated WET) based on Nestle's critical text.

Note: *Definitions of references pulled from WikipediA, The Free Encyclopedia, January 2013.*

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CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE DIFFERENT

God told Israel long ago,

"After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God." [Lev.18:3-4]

God has always wanted His people to be different, to be separated from the world and all its ways. Jesus, in His wonderful High Priestly prayer, said, **"They (Christians) are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"** [Joh.17:16]. We also read in Romans 12:2, **"be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."** Peter also quotes from the Old Testament when he says;

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." [1Pe.2:9]

The Lord said of Israel, **"They feared the LORD, and served their own gods"** [2Kg.17:33]. We must be careful that we do not fall into the same error. We can worship the Lord, and yet serve the gods of this present world. It has been said that when the church gets into the world, the world gets into the church.

We want to consider one area where this has happened to the detriment of our precious young people. If our children and young people attend public schools, they spend more time with worldly friends and associates than they do with parents and other saints. While we cannot isolate them completely, we must teach them and set a godly example of separation for them. When they are very young we must control them. As they become older we teach them right and wrong. This is the way they learn that standards are needed. When they are old enough to make their own choices, they need to know why we have standards. In this way they are enabled to make the right choices for their life.

THE PROBLEM

Even a casual glance at the attitude and ways of the world in the matter of youthful romances should make us realize something is wrong. When it comes to illegitimate births and abortions, statistics tell us that there is very little difference between the world and Christians. Unless there is a revival of Godly principles, this will continue to increase, not only for nominal Christians but also for those professing to be sold-out for the Lord. We pray that this essay may be used of God to stir up our thinking and perhaps help us to re-evaluate our attitude to youthful romances.

If we watch the movies and TV we soon see that the pattern of the world is definitely not for Christians. Over 25 years ago, Hollywood did not show bedroom scenes even between married couples. Today those portrayed as total strangers are displayed in the most intimate of situations. We will all

agree that this is not the standard for God's people. "***There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death***" [Pro.16:25]. This is the way of the world. The so-called "sexual revolution" is nothing more than old fashioned immorality; destructive to man and condemned by God.

The practice of dating involves young people in pairing off at an early age in romantic relationships. We ask the question "Is this God's pattern for our young people?" It may seem that scripture is silent in this area. While it is true we do not find this matter dealt with point-by-point, we believe that the scriptures give light in every area of life.

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Some reason that dating is good preparation for marriage. The dating experience is promoted as a good, healthy way for young people to get to know different members of the opposite sex. This is supposed to help them decide the type of person they would like to marry. We would question the wisdom of romantic involvements as a method of deciding an appropriate marriage partner.

Experience tells us that instead of preparing young people for marriage, such premature romantic attachments prepare them for sorrow and heartbreak or worse.

Doesn't marriage require maturity? Maturity doesn't come by going through a series of broken relationships and heartbreaking bitter experiences. These tend only to harden the heart, making it more difficult to give itself in the selfless love necessary for a good marriage.

Growing in grace, learning self control and responsibility is the best road to maturity and preparation for marriage. Teenage dating has never proved to be a guarantee of a good marriage; in fact, it may be just the opposite. Falling in and out of "love" can become a habit. A heart that has not known the bitterness of a series of emotional breakups has no scars and is able to give itself unreservedly. Our hearts should be broken because of sin and what it cost the Lord Jesus, not by self-pity or bitterness.

When young people start dating in their early teens, these are only to be relationships of a temporary nature. Yet, in each case, there is a commitment involved. When two people start "going together" they claim ownership rights on each other. This means that they are to sever friendships with others of the opposite sex. We have seen many friendships broken by jealousy, strife, and competition. Couples become isolated from other young people because of these same attitudes. Some might argue these things are all part of growing up. So are colds, flu, measles, and mumps. Don't we try to protect our children from illness?

FORNICATION

Among Christians there is agreement that fornication is against God's pattern for His people. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 God tells us, "***Flee fornication. Every sin that***

a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." We stress to our young people that they must not give themselves physically to another before marriage; but, on the other hand, many believe it is permissible to give oneself emotionally.

OWNERSHIP RIGHTS, ON ANY LEVEL, BELONG ONLY WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF MARRIAGE. Let us be consistent. If we teach them to keep themselves sexually pure until marriage, should we not also teach them to keep themselves emotionally pure? Without romantic emotional attachments, physical passions are less likely to take over.

According to Webster's Dictionary the word **chastity** means "*freedom from obscenity, as in language, or conversation, decency, modesty.*" **Chaste** also means "*pure in thought and act, innocent, modest.*" This seems to indicate that chastity involves the whole being.

We parents should protect our children from any entanglement that could end in a harmful physical relationship. The question is "How do we protect them?" It is not possible to keep our young people from being attracted to one another. Nor can we protect them from all the emotional experiences of growing up; but, we must do more than just tell them of the dangers. Why is it so hard for us to say "No?" Many parents not only allow dating but encourage it. Some parents encourage, or sponsor, school dances and such. Children in their early teens would be better off outside playing ball or another activity not designed for the sole purpose of encouraging romantic involvement. I have seen parents tease their young people, even little children, about members of the opposite sex. That only puts thoughts in their minds that probably would not have been there otherwise.

WHAT IS GOD'S WAY?

In the Mosaic Law, God Himself ordained betrothal and specified the rights and responsibilities involved. Marriages were usually arranged by the parents or by the man. That does not suggest that the young woman had no say in the matter. Today, I suppose we would be considered really strange if we suggested arranged marriages. Think about it, don't we all want God to arrange the marriages of our children?

Betrothal in scripture was similar to our engagement today, but there was one distinct difference. The betrothed couple were considered married even though they not yet physically consummated their marriage vows. If one party were unfaithful during that time there would have to be a legal divorce.

In the record of the birth of Jesus [Mat.1:18-20], we see that Joseph and Mary were committed to marriage. Notice that God told Joseph "***fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife.***" To "***put her away***" meant divorce, in which case she would have been publicly accused as an adulteress and executed by stoning (see also Exo.22:16-17 and Deu.22:22-29).

The betrothal period was the time in which the 2 young people could get to know each other better. It also would appear that during this time of betrothal

they would be free to cultivate their love for each other. This would eliminate the problem of marrying without love.

We may argue that we are not under Law and that we live in different times with different customs. All this is true, but God still has standards of moral conduct. These standards not only bring honor to Him but also protect our dear young people from disaster. God's ways are the best ways, yesterday, today, and in any age. We must not try to impose legalistic standards on others, but God will hold us accountable for how we have trained our own children.

When Israel left Egypt, they took their children with them. They also took all their goods and cattle. "**Not a hoof**" was left behind. The king of Egypt (a picture of Satan) will still try to tell us we are going too far, we are becoming fanatical, etc. He will try to persuade us to leave our children behind, or allow them to be involved in things that will hinder their spiritual growth. He may not say it exactly like that; he is usually more subtle. His argument may be that we have to let our children take part in worldly activities or we will deprive them of something profitable. He may tell us that we are too strict and will alienate them. These are not God's thoughts; He calls for a complete separation from the world.

WHAT WOULD WORK TODAY?

- How do the principles of Scripture relate to the age in which we live?
- Should we have dating at all?
- If so, what purpose does it serve?

The writer feels very strongly that dating should be with the expectation of marriage; more of a courtship nature. One should not date someone that they know they would never marry.

DATING SHOULD NEVER BE CONSIDERED EVANGELISM

If our young people never go out on a first date with an unbeliever, we do not need to fear they will marry that one. **THEY SHOULD LEARN TO BE EFFECTIVE WITNESSES APART FROM DATING. IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO WITNESS TO SOMEONE THEY ARE ROMANTICALLY INVOLVED WITH.** We have known girls who would not marry a certain young man until he became a Christian. Of course he was willing to make a profession to get the girl of his choice. Such a profession cannot be relied on as a true salvation experience. Salvation is of the Lord and is the result of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. A spiritual saint can discern the true work of God. One is not "born again" because he wants a marriage partner. Such marriages are headed for trouble.

KEEP YOUR HEART PURE

The scripture advises us to "***Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life***" [Pro.4:23]. The word **issues** used here literally means "geographical boundaries or borders." Jesus said "***Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh***" [Mat.12:34]. We need to set boundaries for our hearts. Parents need to help the young person in this matter. They are growing up, but are not mature enough to understand fully how to do this. What happens if we give our heart to the wrong person?

Daniel "***purposed in his heart***" that he would not be defiled by the heathen among whom he lived. We also should purpose in our hearts that we will not be defiled by partaking of the hurtful, unprofitable customs of the world. We should note that Daniel made this commitment of heart before the test came. The time to make a heart purpose is not when faced with the temptation, but well before the situation ever arises. It should be made as a matter of prayerful dedication to God; a once-for-all decision.

God's ideal is for one man and one woman to be totally committed to each other for life.

"Husbands, love your wives." [Eph.5:25]

"That they may teach the young women to...love their husbands." [Tiu.2:4]

These scripture verses command that we are to love the one we marry. What do we usually do today? Do we not turn this around and advocate marrying the one we love?

Here is the problem: Young people start dating, fall in love, and get married; not because it is the Lord's choice but because they are "in love." Should such an important decision as marriage be made by the emotions? Would it not be better to seek the Lord and let Him choose the one He has for us before we commit ourselves emotionally to anyone? Again, here is where parents should have a part. We should pray earnestly for our young people in their choice of a mate. Then we should guide and encourage them to keep themselves from hurtful romantic relationships.

WON'T WE MISS ALL THE "FUN?"

Perhaps some young person reading this may think we are being old-fashioned, or that we just have forgotten what it is like to be young. Quite the contrary, it is out of experience that we speak. What about all the fun of dating and boy-girl relationships?

- Is "breaking up" fun?
- Is it fun to be left out of things because you don't happen to have a date?
- Is it fun when that special someone tries to control you or pressure you into an intimate relationship?
- Was it fun when they found themselves pregnant or with some dread disease?

Ask these questions of those who succumbed to pressure or passion. God is a loving and forgiving God. When He forgives, He forgets. So should we, but lives are affected permanently by wrong decisions."

We don't want to look only at the negatives; there is a positive side also. The Lord wants us to be free so that we may grow in grace and learn to serve and worship Him. It is hard to grow when we are in an emotional upheaval. Growing needs freedom. Positive fellowship and wholesome friendships, which young people need, are the result of freedom. Unprofitable romantic associations are a hindrance that lead to broken hearts, broken fellowship, and separation between friends.

Christian young people should be encouraged to do things together. Group activities can be enjoyable and profitable, especially when they involve worship together and praying for each other. However, there is no need to limit these activities to what are considered "spiritual things." Other activities can also be done as a group. There should not be the pressure to pair off for social events.

FINAL THOUGHTS TO PARENTS

Perhaps when we were growing up we were allowed to date freely. This makes it hard for us to conceive of anything negative about it. We tend to forget the negatives. It is also difficult to say to our children "you cannot" when we did it. Perhaps we didn't grow up in a Christian home. Whatever the situation when we were growing up, we must realize that standards have changed a lot since we were young. Today, the pressure on our young people is far greater. Many schools not only promote dating, but also sexual experimentation. As Godly parents, we are the only positive influence our children have. They are in school more hours than they are with us, or in church, or with their Christian friends. May God grant us faith to believe Him for the safety of our children, and the moral courage to do what we must to protect them.

"Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the Lord: he is their help and shield. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children." [Psa.115:11, 13-14]

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