

DATING, MATING, & RELATING

YOUNG & GODLY

by Pastor Justin Torossian

PICTURE PERFECT

Love is in the air. The couple seems perfect for each other...everyone seems to agree. But unexpectedly, something happens. They break up. The days and months spent investing in what they thought would be “*happily ever after*” ends in sorrow and pain. When found in such a time, what does a young lady typically do with the pictures of her former love? If it was a bitter end to a sweet relationship, she’ll often shatter the frames and tear the pictures to shreds. Anything that reminds her of the joy that’s been lost must go.

When Satan was cast out of Heaven, his bitter hatred had separated him from the Creator. Anything that reminded him of the heavenly joy that he had lost, he attempted to destroy. There are two gifts that God especially created to be pictures of Heaven on earth—the seventh day Sabbath, and marriage. The devil has done his best to break these pictures. Not only do they remind him of the heavenly relationships he has lost, but they also give humanity a true picture of our loving God. For most of us, the picture of God in marriage has become so damaged that we’re confused. What are God’s ideals for dating and courtship?

What guidelines does He provide to assure success on the path to marriage?

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Timing is often everything. Timing can make the difference between a three-pointer and a blocked shot, an accident or a close call ... *hooking up with Prince Charming or getting stuck with Captain Creepy*. God tells us about the importance of timing in Ecclesiastes 3, summarizing with the promise, “*He has made everything beautiful in His time*” (Eccl. 3:11). Waiting until the right time to be in a relationship is one of the most important factors in allowing God to match you up with someone for a happy life. But we all have the tendency to feel like we’re ready before we actually are.

Some of the Bible’s greatest wisdom about marriage preparation is found in Proverbs 24:27: “*Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house.*” One of the most crucial requirements before considering marriage is making sure you have a job and can support a family. (*This applies in part to girls as well* — Proverbs 31:16). And just like rides at theme parks have a minimum height, there is

also a minimum age before which the vast majority of young people should not consider marriage—20 years old. “*A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness of a person, as young as himself, to be his companion for life.*”¹ Before you consider these words written 130 years ago to be outdated, consider the following stats. “*Those who marry as teenagers have a divorce rate about double those who marry in their 20’s ... Just picking age as a factor, those who marry in the mid-to late-twenties, or early thirties, seem to have the most enduring marriages.*”² So if you don’t have an income on which you can support a family or are under 20 years old, inspiration says, “*Wait!*”

PREPARATION

This may come as a surprise, but the best preparation for a happy relationship that leads to a solid marriage is actually in your own home. This is the perfect place for preparation to have a happy home of your own. “*It is by faithfulness to duty in the parental home that the youth are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let them here practice self-denial, and manifest kindness, courtesy, and Christian sympathy.*”³ As you dream about your future, know that the way you carry yourself in your home *now* will determine what your home will be like *then*. In challenges and chores, frustrations and happy times, you are charting your own future. Take comfort knowing that if you allow Him to, Jesus Himself will lead you.

The most important preparation possible is found in the story of Adam and Eve. God could have created them together, but He didn’t. After breathing into Adam’s lifeless form the breath of life, the first person that he saw was the face of God. The Bible also says that

after God made Eve, “*He brought her to the man*” (Genesis 2:22). So, like Adam, the first face that Eve ever looked upon was that of her Creator—Jesus. *Here’s the point*. We often hear people say things like “you complete me” to their boyfriends, girlfriends, or fiancés ... but the true Christian is only completed by Christ. We discover our identity in seeing the face of God. And *only* when we find our identity and completeness in Him can we be ready to have our life happily united with another. Hands down, *this* is the most paramount preparation for a healthy courtship and marriage.

Be sure not to miss part two next time where we’ll learn about “The Second Most Successful Matchmaker in History,” discuss “The Flip of Physical Intimacy,” and discover “What to do When The Time *is* Right.”

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- *Letters to Young Lovers* book by Ellen White
- *They Lived Happily Ever After* sermon series by Pastor Bohr www.secretsunsealed.org
- CROSS — *Christian Resources on Spouse Selection* a powerful workbook mybiblefirst.org
- *Happily Ever After: Finding True Love God’s Way*, audio sermon series by Alan and Nicole Parker www.audioverse.org
- *Keys for a Happy Marriage* free Bible study www.amazingfacts.org

1 *Solemn Appeal*, p. 52

2 Michael McManus, *American Family Association Journal*, 2003

3 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 176