

## DEEPER LIFE CAMPUS FELLOWSHIP, CANADA

### INTERACTIVE COUNSELLING/SEMINAR

#### TOPIC: COPING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF SINGLEHOOD

Marriage is an important aspect of our lives that we cannot handle in a flimsy manner. God designed marriage and instituted it in the beginning at creation. Therefore, if we are to get married successfully, we must follow God's blueprint and not the world's methods.

One of the greatest problems of young people is sexual immorality. God commands everyone to be morally upright. In contemporary times, the societal influences try to make everyone believe that there can be no fixed standard for morality, even though, those who hold such views couldn't deny the fixed consequences of such immoral acts. Man is fast degenerating from **immorality** to **amorality**!

*"Immorality describes someone, who knows the difference between what is right or wrong; but doesn't care about moral standards; in other words, it means to be morally wrong; amorality describes the condition of someone without moral bearings; devoid of moral categories".* Christians are not expected to be involved in any form of immoralities, irrespective of the approval given to it by the systems of this world. Everyone is called to steer clear of all forms of immoralities and at the right time, get married in a right way to the glory of God (Ephesians 5:3).

Is it possible to be morally upright or chaste in this world? Do you know if you are crossing the moral line? Is there a way out of this present societal distress (1Corinthians 7:26)? Why does God command all young people to wait for marriage (Hebrews 13:4)?

#### WHAT DOES IT MEANS TO WAIT?

Isaiah 40:31, Psalms 27:13-14, Psalms 37:34, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 2 Timothy 2:22

The focus of this seminar is to encourage and challenge single Christians to remain chaste and undefiled before marriage. As singles, the Lord is calling us to a high calling – **waiting**. No doubt, this would require patience, which is a fruit of the Spirit. There are blessings and promises for those who wait on the Lord (Isaiah 40:31). However, waiting in the area of marriage is a challenge for many young people. Understandably, we live in an age where people to get things done quickly. This attitude of impatience is seeping into the fabric of some believers' lives especially young people at the verge of marriage. The Lord admonishes us in several parts of the scriptures on the benefits of waiting. One of such important areas we are to wait on the Lord is in the area of keeping ourselves from any form of sexual and unclean relationship. Being a virgin until marriage is the plan of God for every individual even though it is considered old fashioned and archaic (Matthew 19:8-9). The Bible further

admonishes all to “flee fornication” (1Thessalonians 5:22) because “whoremongers and adulterers will be judged” (Hebrews 13:4).

So how do we handle pressures from the flesh and the world around us in the area of sexual temptation, especially after reaching the age of puberty and still keep ourselves pure? The Bible provides the answer in Psalm 119:9 which says **“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word”**. Our lives and attitudes should not be governed by the world but by the word of God.

- i. Make sure you are genuinely born again (John 3:3)
- ii. Maintain a daily relationship with God – Read your Bible and pray every day (Psalms 119:9,11)
- iii. Be a part of a community of believers – we are made to connect. Fellowship is crucial in avoiding loneliness (Hebrews 10:25)
- iv. Keep godly friends – those we associate with will influence our character (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- v. Be busy for God – Remember now your creator (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
- vi. Stay away from ungodly movies – they do not teach and promote godliness. You are a product of the information you consume (Psalms 101:3)
- vii. Don’t develop closeness with the opposite sex. It usually leads to unholy feelings and false assumptions (2 Timothy 2:22).

## **PRACTICAL DISCUSSIONS**

### **WHAT TO DO AND WHAT NOT TO DO WHILE WAITING**

There are several problems that confronts single men and ladies prior to marriage. However, it is very important to wait for God’s perfect will in marriage. Arguably, amongst Christians, one of the most rampant challenge is praying through to get a clear leading from God about who to marry. Sometimes, the feelings of loneliness, low-self esteem, temptation to be unduly close to the opposite gender, etc. could lead young people into unholy relationships.

Rather than follow path of dating that is common in the world today, **single Christians are admonished to pray and follow the path of a God-glorifying courtship into marriage**. While some Christians claim no difference between courtship and dating, **scriptures clearly shows that courtship/betrothal/espousal was the common biblical practice rather than dating where there is no serious commitment (2 Samuel 3:14; SOS 3:11; Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:27; 2:5; 2 Corinthians 11:2)**. Hence, courtship, as a term, has a crucial meaning and value to Christians.

**What is courtship?** *It is important to understand what God demands from us and the reasons behind His instructions.*

1. Courtship is **a relationship that begins between a man and a woman after they have prayed and believed that they are God's will for one another in marriage.** Under the protection, guidance, and blessing of parents or mentors, the intending couple concentrates on developing a deep friendship that leads into marriage (Proverbs 3:5–7). They use this period to further confirm that they are truly God's will for each other (1John4:1).
2. Courtship is a choice to avoid temptation and experience the blessings of purity. **It is a choice to not emotionally give away your heart, piece by piece, to many others through casual dating relationships and instead to give your whole heart to your life partner.**
3. It is **a choice to wait for God's best, for His glory.** It is a decision to walk by faith, to trust in God, to honor others above yourself, and to believe that God will deal bountifully with you, because He is love. (2 Corinthians 5:7; Psalm 9:10; Romans 12:10; Psalm 13; 1John 4:8). Because each individual family, and set of circumstances is unique, **each courtship will be unique.** While those who choose courtship will hold to general guidelines for the relationship, their specific choices about when, where, and how to court may differ according to their needs and circumstances.

However, under certain conditions, one or both parties may see the need to put an end to the relationship, the courtship has not failed, rather it was successful, **the termination of a courtship** is better than a broken marriage.

## **Differences Between Courtship and Dating**

### **1. Purpose of the Relationship**

The main difference between dating and courtship involves the goals to be reached by spending time with a potential marriage partner. **Men and women who choose to date often have no commitment to consider marrying the other person.** Maturity and readiness for marriage are not considerations in the decision to date. Instead, couples usually date with the selfish goals of having fun and enjoying romantic attachments.

In contrast, **courtship is undertaken only when both parties are prepared to make a commitment to marriage.** Dating tries to answer the question; *how can I find the one who will make me happy?* On the other hand, courtship strives to answer the question, *How can I honor God and discern His direction regarding my life partner?*

## **2. Accountability to Authorities**

In a dating relationship, there is little or no accountability for the partners and little or no interaction with family members. The dating couple is merely attracted to one another in some way and often pursues **an exclusive relationship that is independent of others' influence or counsel**. Since the boundaries of the relationship are self-determined, the couple may easily succumb to temptation and fail to consider their responsibility to honor each other in purity and genuine love.

Generally, when an intending couple participating in courtship seeks the accountability of their parents and/or other mentors. As they establish guidelines for their relationship. Receiving God's grace and the support of others strengthens them to maintain their commitment to purity.

## **3. Exposure to Temptation**

Commonly in a dating relationship, self-gratification is normally the basis of the relationship. **Instead of focusing on God's pleasure, the intending couple is often looking for personal pleasure**. This oblivious self-centeredness usually leads to dissatisfaction, promoting an attitude of lust (taking what I want) rather than the Scriptural attitude of love (giving unselfishly to others).

- 4. Dating opens the door to many temptations.** If defrauding (stirring up desires that cannot be righteously satisfied) occurs, the couple can foolishly and tragically give away both emotional and physical affections that should have been reserved for a life partner. Thus, in a dating relationship, intimacy precedes commitment. On the other hand, **a courting couple can evade numerous temptations** by the choice to be held accountable to God-given authorities. The dangers of defrauding can be avoided more successfully, and an honest, open friendship can be nurtured and protected. Thus, **in courtship, commitment precedes intimacy**.

Since one of the most important decisions we will make is the decision of marriage, we should make every effort to know and do God's will in this area. A dating relationship is usually based only on what the dating couple presently knows about each other. However, a Biblical courtship is based on what God knows about each partner and or His plans for their futures. Hence, the need for each partner to know and understand how God speaks to them.

Jesus gave this instruction with a promise: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33). When a person makes a growing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ the foundation of all decisions—as he or she seeks God's kingdom—God will

provide all that is needed, including the marriage partner prepared by God just for that person. (Proverbs 18:22, 19:14.)

### **HOW TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL WHILE WAITING?**

Psalms 32:8, Isa 30:21, James 1: 5-8, Jeremiah 10:23, Psalms 25:9-10, Romans 8:14

The most reliable way to know God's will in the area of marriage is to pray and trust in God. There is no shortcut to this because the bible encourages us to commit our ways unto the Lord (Psalms 37:5). We cannot know people by just what we see physically. God is the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God. He knows the heart of all men. He knows what is good for us. He knows what he has planned for us in the future and He knows who will fit into our lives to help us fulfill our God given destiny. Some basic principles are necessary in discerning the will of God:

- i. Make sure you have a genuine salvation and you are living a holy life
- ii. Pray about your marriage. If possible fast and pray – it is better to hear from God about your marriage before going into it (Matthew 7:7-11)
- iii. Read God's word and promises about guidance (Psalms 119:105)
- iv. Declutter your mind from any idols and man-made criteria (Isaiah 30:19-22)
- v. Have strong faith that God will guide you (Proverbs 3:5)
- vi. Seek for guidance and prayers through spiritual leaders (Proverbs 11:14)
- vii. Do not engage in a close relationship with opposite sex (Isaiah 48:17)
- viii. Do not allow people, parents and friends to match make for you (Isaiah 48:17)
- ix. Remember that it is important to marry someone who has the same convictions as you (Amos 3:3)
- x. Be obedient to a spiritual authority in handling marriage proposals whether the person is of the same church with you or not (Hebrews 13:17).
- xi. Be focused on marrying a believer - you cannot marry an unbeliever even if the unbeliever goes to church (2 Corinthians 6:14).
- xii. Note the unmarriageable categories and avoid them (Romans 16:17) – Divorced/divorcee (Matthew 19: 9), bigamist (Genesis 2:24; 5:2; John 4:18), and homosexual (Romans 1:26,27).

#### **God can use various ways to speak to you which includes but not limited to:**

- i. Strong, calm, peaceful love for the person – not lust or infatuation (SOS 8:7)
- ii. God's voice in your spirit telling you who the person is (Isaiah 30:21)
- iii. Bible verses that will confirm who it is (Psalms 119:105)
- iv. Dreams, visions, prophecies and revelations (Genesis 18:14)
- v. Divinely arranged circumstances that bring the two of you together (Genesis 24:14).

There are other ways that God may use to lead, but generally, God will choose a medium that will be clear to you and it will be a biblical method. Usually, it will be a method that God has used to speak to you previously about other aspects of your life.

Once you feel that God is leading you to a person, there are some fundamental things to check for in order to confirm whether it is God leading you or not.

- a. Peace in your heart (Isaiah 26:3)
- b. Future partner's confirmation (Genesis 24:67)
- c. Pastoral approval and support (Proverbs 11:14)
- d. Parental consent and support (Ephesian 6:1).

### **WHAT TO ENJOY IF WE WAIT AND DO GOD'S WILL**

Deuteronomy 28:1-14, Exo 23:22, Hebrews 10:36, Isaiah 58:8

There are several benefits in doing the will of God in marriage. God designed marriage for love and companionship. Being in love with the right person will give you joy and peace. A man who loves God will obey God's word to love you (Ephesians 5:25), and the woman who loves God will obey God to honour, respect and submit to your headship (Ephesians 5:22,33) You will also have confidence in your marriage when storms or difficulties arise. You will be sure that God is with you because you did His will. Those who have married God's perfect will for their lives are enjoying their marriages and preparing for heaven with their life partner. However, those who have despised God's plan in marriage are now regretting. You have a choice today to open up your hearts and allow God to direct you. You will have no regrets!