**TOPIC: UNDERSTANDING COURTSHIP**

**What is Understanding?**

It is the ability to see into a matter and discern its composition by grasping the connections between its parts and the whole, thus getting the sense of it. (Proverbs 4:1)

What is Courtship? It’s a period before the actual marriage, period of agreement between the both parties. OR it is a preparation stage to your marriage or period before engagement.

**What is Engagement?**

Engagement is what succeeds a satisfactory courtship period. It is when you and your partner have made up your mind to spend the rest of your lives together in marriage. At this time, you are both formally introduced to your parents, pastors, friends and relations. It is also the stage at which the dowry or bride price is paid in most cases as a demonstration of love for your would-be spouse.

The Engagement period, being the peak period of courtship, is also a time when your partner and you will need to spend more time praying, fasting and gathering knowledge from the Word of God concerning His promises and commandments needed for a successful family life. Many couples tend to get carried away with various activities during this period that they never seem to find time to seek God. If there is any time to seek God more, it is at this time because both of you will face several challenges, distractions etc.

**Aim/Objectives of this Topic; To**

1. Understand the meaning of Courtship
2. Purpose of Courtship
3. Conduct during Courtship
4. Levels of Joining during Courtship

**PURPOSE OF COURTSHIP**

1. **Consolidation of your conviction:** it is a period to confirm, opportunity to consolidate and establish your conviction. To make sure the foundation will not be shaken.
2. **To understand and understudy one another:** that is to know what may be of problem in future.

* If you are really ready to marry the brother or sister.
* To know if you can withstand each other’s differences.

1. **To share vision together:** know if your vision are in any form similar or of same aim. Apart from vision of physical achievement what about highly vision; are you of same mind . or is brother point up and sister is pointing down in kingdom matters
2. **Period of orientation:** know your family life {background of each others} culture of your partner. Infact integrity of each sister :sister knowing about the man’s background.
3. **Period/for familiarization:** to let people who have drown interest in your life to be aware {to avoid violence and misunderstanding}.let people know that both of you have intention of been together
4. It is a period for your parents to gradually release you to the brother or sister to avoid interruption or feeling of being snatched away from each other {don’t give anybody by what is not within the person power to control}
5. It is a period of planning /preparation of your wedding etc no of children to have
6. **It is a time of amalgamating in the presence of God**: Both churches, ministries, focus may be sister is living in city singing and brother is a missionary elsewhere.

**HOW TO CONDUCT COURTSHIP PERIOD**

N.B. you are not married until you are married. Courtship is an engagement to getting to marriage. It is not a time to come together sexually

Please! Please! It is a sin Thess. 5 vs. 21 – 22

- Your cheating yourself

- You destroy your affection {Thess. 4:3-7}

**REMEMBER!!** The relationship can shill quit at this point if any serious issues come up.

E.g. Joseph and Mary were good examples to look unto

1. It must be conducted in every manner of holiness so that even if the marriage later did not work you will not regret it. {holiness is the atmosphere}

* Purity is the background. Thess. 3 vrs 7

**How to go about it**

- build some barriers in your {mind} with the word of God.

N.B the moment you set to know that this brother is going to be your man or woman, that barrier is broken – it is a trap please this relaxation must be gradual.

**LEVEL OF JOINING DURING COURTSHIP**

1. **Joining together of your spirit**: your spirit is the heart hub of your question: is both of you born again, having deep fellowship with God.
2. Study the word of god together
3. Praying together not in a dark room

* Listening together to same kind of person that can inspire both of you so that understanding will not be different, decide your fiancé or fiancée to develop spiritually it will be to your greatest advantage. It is the period of courtship you start developing it, which will continue in your marriage.

1. **Joining together of mind {Amos3 vrs 3}, Philip 2 vrs 1-4:** your thinking, values, eating, all about you is in the mind.

N.B because you did not grow in the same house /background there is peculiarities

- Your mind are not set on the same thing

- Perspective are not alike

- What will excite you may irritate your partner

- What you take serious may not be same with him or her

-Helping to set mind together

1. **Is object of love** –both of you should love same thing but not differently, that is being of one accord, it doesn’t happen in one day is gradual . Willing to suspend your own thinking, that is not been antagonistic in his way of thinking, you need to listen to him/her.

e.g. Progress may mean more money

Progress may mean doing what God wants them to do.

The woman thinks different from man

{Question} do women concentrate at 3 or 4 things at the same time more than men?

**Way Out—{Holiness of Heart}**

-Discussion must not be argument

-Willingness to accept superior ideas not mandating it to be yours

-Renewing of your minds with the Word of God.

-Recondition your heroes{summit your heroes}

-Listen to same cassette, people etc

-Look out for the interest of your partner {it is all about selflessness}

1. **Joining together of the body**
2. Physical issues

- learning to maintain partnership in working together.

-being interested in what he does or she does {profession}

-physical properties {ear, money}please don’t over step your boundary

-don’t join your body yet.

Please divert the affection

You discuss sexual relationship very close to time of your wedding, so that you will not fall {songs of song 3:5b}

In conclusion –commit your way to the lord and he will direct your paths please don’t rush your courtship but should not be lingered to help you handle issues concerning your marriage.

**Agreement**

The bedrock of marriage is agreement and the first stage takes place in courtship. There must been agreement between you and your partner from day one. Both of you must have agreed to spend the rest of your lives together in marriage. Both of you must be able non pressing issues that concern your future together. God’s Word in amos 3;3 says; Can two work together, except they be agreed? Where there is no agreement, there will be confusion, disorderliness, disunity and that home will definitely become a workshop for the devil. A solid agreement will go a long way in ensuring the success of your relationship, even after your courtship period

**Christian Character**

Character is like smoke; no matter how hard you pretend, it cannot be hidden. You and your partner must have good Christian Characters that speak. Both of you must be god-fearing and doers of God’s commandment on truthfulness, commitment to do things of god like fellowship, Kingdom service, tithing, offering etc. This is why God Commands that you join yourself with someone of like belief and faith. The Bible says in 2 Corinthian 6:14-15: be ye not unequally yoked together with : for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? The Character of the two of you must radiate the fruits of the spirit mentioned in Ephesians 5:9 and Galatians 5:22-23. A good Christian character will guide your partner from acting the way any nature person would, thereby saving you from sorrows and hurts.

**Progress**

A Christian courtship must progressively culminate in engagement and then marriage. Proverbs 4:18 says: But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more unto the perfect day. This means constant progress/ advancement is being made physically, spiritually, materially, mentally and in every other area.

Lack of progress leads lead to defilement (proverbs 13:12) or stagnation and ‘stagnant water, they say, stink ‘. The success of every good courtship period is that it should end in something more meaningful.

**Pre-Marital Sex**

Many begin quite well in the spirit and end up messing themselves up by engaging in the work of the flesh. Galatians 5:19-21 lists the various work of the flesh. Since courtship is not marriage, you have no martial right over each other. God’s word in Hebrews 13:4 Says: Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled… what you do with the bed during courtship is laying a foundation for what your marriage will be like when you get into it. There is no room for sexual relationship or anything that leads to it while in courtship. Yes, you intend to marry, but as long as you are not yet married, it is sinful for you to go into it. Pre-marital sex does not only defile, it also destroys trust, honour and respect from your spouse in marriage. It is like a wound. Even when it’s healed, the scar still remains.

Contrary recreation that may cause you to easily lose grip, if your relationship with God is not firm

Some Christian begins in the Spirit and end up in the flesh. The word of god list all the Various Works of the flesh: Now the work of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Some begin quite well in the Spirit, but mess up half way by engaging themselves in the work of the flesh. All categories of uncleanness are referred to as the works of the flesh. Since courtship is not marriage, you have no marriage rights over the other until marriage is contracted. The Bible says: Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled (Hebrews 13:4).

Marriage is an honourable thing when the bed is undefiled. Once the bed is defiled, that marriage has lost its honour. What you do with the bed during courtship amounts to laying a foundation for what your marriage will be like when you get into it. The law of sowing and reaping still holds here. The Bible says: Whilst the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest shall not cease… (Genesis 8:22). Since the earth is still remaining, whatever a man sows, he will reap. When the bed is defiled, the seed is sown and you can be sure that it will produce and when harvest time comes, it will manifest.

**Discuss your visions and goals together**

In other not to engage in the works of the flesh, this is the time to discuss about your visions and goals together. This is a very important point to note. Goals and plans for the future ought to be made clear to each other. Marriage is for help, not hurt. It is a decision made by you to help the other party fulfill his or her goals and vision in life and vice versa.

Before I married my husband, I had known what direction he wanted to take. I had known his depth of love for God, his character and his integrity. Ours was quite a long courtship but I have no regrets. It has really helped me in being able to understand the kind of person he is and because of that, we have enjoyed every bit of our marriage. Just a word of caution “A broken courtship is better than a broken marriage”. When you discover differences that show incompatibility, it is wiser to dissolve the relationship instead of being another number on the divorce list.

**Check for Maturity**

Since the period of courtship is a time of proving all things, it is wisdom to prove his or her maturity. In God’s concept, marriage is for men and women, not for boys and girls. The Bible says: the rib, which the lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man (Genesis 2:22). The Word of God also says: Therefore shall a man … cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Take particular note of these words ‘man’ and ‘woman’ in the above passages. Maturity is required before marriage. One need to be matured spiritually, physically and emotionally and this must be addressed in courtship.

However, maturity can be determined from two views points: Age and ability to handle life situations. These two put together help in determining how mature an individual is. One that is mature for marriage should be able to assume responsibility for his or her actions, and take up the welfare of his or her spouse and children. If you are not mature enough to be a parent, then you are not mature enough for marriage. Adulthood is a basic requirement for success in marriage.

When you are spiritually, emotionally and physically mature for marriage, you will be able to control various aspects of your life and also, you will be in control of your emotions. Wild emotions or impure emotions can lead to defilement of the marriage bed in courtship. You will discover, therefore, that God’s concept of courtship is quite different from man’s concept. Everybody has a choice to make whether or not to accept man’s concept or God’s. however, it should be noted that God, who is the sole designer of courtship and marriage, has the correct view, His view must be taken, if we desire to reap the full reward of honour in marriage via pure courtship.

It is the ability to see into a matter and discern its composition by grasping the connections between its parts and the whole thus getting the sense of it. (Proverbs 4:1).