

LESSON 3

CHOOSING A PARTNER

Old Testament Patterns

Old Testament customs of marriage apparently coincided with other ancient Near Eastern cultures. The father, who was head of the household, usually initiated the plans for marriage on behalf of his sons. He selected and made arrangements for the bride with her father, and she was more or less a passive participant in the transaction.

Abraham instructed his servant to go to Abraham's kindred and take a wife for his son Isaac (Gen. 24:4ff.). The story emphasizes the leadership of Yahweh in the choice of Isaac's wife. The servant prayed for Yahweh's guidance and was directed to Rebekah by the sign of the damsel's giving him and his camels water (Gen. 24:14ff.). Rebekah took the servant to her father's house after he had given her gifts of silver, gold, and clothing; additional gifts were given to her brother and to her mother (Gen. 24:53). Statements by the servant implied that Rebekah had some voice in whether or not she would return with him to be Isaac's wife (Gen. 24:39, 58).

Laban gave his daughters to Jacob (Gen. 29:23, 28), and Hamor negotiated with Jacob to arrange a marriage between his son Shechem and Jacob's daughter Dinah (Gen. 34:8). Hagar, the mother, took the initiative in arranging for her son Ishmael's marriage (Gen. 21:21).

In modern Western culture, the custom of fathers' arranging for the marriages of their children has not been perpetuated. In many Eastern cultures, this custom still prevails, but in such countries as Japan and India the practice of young people's choosing their own mates is becoming acceptable.

The Christian Church has not felt compelled to follow the example of the Hebrew culture as reflected in the Bible. There is no evidence that the marriage customs of the Jews were meant to be binding on Christians of other cultures. Although the choice of a mate has become the responsibility of the son, the practice of the father's making the marriage arrangements was not altogether bad as has been implied by many who are blinded by an extreme individualism and the concept of romantic love.

In the Old Testament, the father usually initiated the plans for the marriage of his _____ . He selected and made arrangements for the bride with her _____ .

(son, father)

Christians have not felt compelled to follow Old Testament customs, and the choice of a mate has become the responsibility of the _____ .

(son)

Getting Acquainted

Association of young men and women

As cultures change to allow young people to select their own mates, opportunities must be increased for their association with each other in order to allow them to get acquainted. Otherwise, they will be devoid of knowledge and understanding of the opposite sex when they come to the time of choosing a partner. Because they lack experience, young people have great difficulty and often make mistakes in choosing a suitable potential companion for life. They frequently are unable to evaluate accurately desirable and undesirable characteristics of their friends. Perhaps the main reason for many divorces is the lack of knowing what characteristics to look for in a future companion.

In early childhood, friends are chosen without regard to sex. Some children progress towards adolescence without developing a strong awareness of the distinction. Some girls become "tomboys" and participate with boys in sports, while others develop separate interests. During pre-adolescent years, it is normal for girls to be interested in many things, including boys and how to attract them. Boys are eager to know that girls like them. One ten-year-old told her older sister, "It's easy to get boys to like you. You just ignore them and act mean to them and whisper things about them to your friends and tell them you've got a secret." Others are not as successful in attracting the attention of boys.

As young people enter the age of adolescence and begin to develop more distinct sex characteristics, their attitudes towards one another begin to change. In some cultures where freedom of association prevails, dating begins at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Dating has been described as simply a time for boys and girls to get to know one another. In some cultures, it is associated with pre-marital sex, but Christians believe that these intimate relations should be delayed until marriage. Usually, supervised group dating precedes double or single dating.¹ Dating may be defined in general terms as the social engagement of boys and girls for the purpose of enjoying each other's company. It does not imply necessarily emotional involvement or matrimonial commitment. Concerned Christian parents, especially of girls, supervise the early stages of dating.

The dangers of dating

Social dating which provides a time simply for getting to know one another often leads to problems

¹Group dating refers to a number of boys and girls together for a social occasion without each having a specific partner. Double dating refers to more than one couple participating in a social occasion. Single dating refers to a couple being together alone.

If young people are to select their own partners, they must have opportunities to _____ with each other to get _____.

(associate, acquainted)

Are the following statements true or false?

- 1. Dating is a time when boys and girls "go together" for the purpose of getting acquainted and enjoying each other's company. _____*
- 2. Dating always indicates emotional involvement and matrimonial commitment. _____*

(1. true, 2. false)

caused by practices described as "necking," "petting," and "making out." After beginning single dating, young couples often find a secluded place and spend long hours alone. Frequently these young people find themselves in trouble.

Necking refers to embracing and kissing. Petting may be defined as physical contact between a boy and girl for the purpose of physical sensation and pleasure which stops short of illicit relations.

Although most Christian young people are taught that immoral relations are sinful and will bring punishment, many are permissive and do not maintain high moral standards. Often the boy claims greater freedom and goes as far as the girl permits. He stands to lose less socially in the event of pregnancy and frequently does not heed biblical moral requirements. Sometimes girls do not realize that boys are aroused sexually more easily than they, and what seems to them to be relatively safe petting may lead the boy beyond the point of self-control. Petting may result in the boy's placing greater pressure on the girl to submit than he really intended to at first, or the girl may be aroused to an emotional response that is new to her and may interpret it as love. Insecure girls often use petting on social dates to gain boy-friends, but this device frequently leads to the lowering of the couple's opinion of each other. Boys who are interested in girls because they pet on dates actually are interested only in themselves—the satisfying of their own desires.

Kissing and embracing show affection, but they also are sexually stimulating, especially for the boy who responds more readily than the girl. A kiss or an embrace in public to show affection between long-time friends is acceptable, but repeated kissing and embracing by an unmarried couple who are alone is dangerous and often leads to unplanned sexual relations. Wise young people with moral convictions avoid exposing themselves to such strong temptations. Those who do go "all the way" reap a harvest of guilt feelings and shame. Petting on social dates is the basic cause of many pre-marital pregnancies. When sex gets out of hand during dating, young people become conditioned against it and develop emotional problems and unhealthy attitudes about sex, marriage, and life.

Paul said to the Ephesians:

Do not live any longer as the gentiles live. For they live blindfold in a world of illusion, and are cut off from the light of God through ignorance and insensitiveness. They have stifled their consciences and then surrendered themselves to sensuality, practicing any form of impurity which lust can suggest. But you have learned nothing like that from Christ, if you have really heard his voice and understood the truth that Jesus has taught you. (Eph. 4:17-21, Phillips)

Three dangers of petting are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Petting on social dates is the basic cause of pre-marital p_____.

(pregnancies)

Petting on social dates amounts to "surrendering oneself to sensuality" and allowing lust to lead to impurity. Paul gives instructions to young people in his words to young Timothy: "Keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22b).

Moral standards of society are changing. In the past, even the wildest young men expected eventually to marry a good girl. "Virginity was much to be desired in unmarried women, and brides were expected to merit the white wedding gown that denotes purity."² The traditional standard expected pre-marital chastity and post-marital fidelity, at least for the girl, and the Church required the same for both men and women. With the changing of social opinion brought on by licentious magazine articles, the emphases of newspaper reporting, movies, television programmes, and the materialistic philosophy of women's liberation movements, girls are placed under tremendous pressure to yield to pre-marital sex "because everyone is doing it." Many young people have not yielded and continue to maintain the standard required by Christ. They avoid situations which place them under extreme pressure and temptations, such as going on car dates and parking, being alone in a house, and spending extensive periods of time in a secluded spot.

Illicit sex does not bring the fulfilment that it promises. The brief time of sensual delight is followed by lingering shame and guilt. Anxieties and emotional problems often develop, lives become entangled, and courses of action are taken which are not desirable. Many are forced to marry and soon find themselves seeking divorces. The problems of remaining married become too great; divorce solves some of them but adds others. The best solution to any problem is prevention. Wise young people will adopt practices and standards of activities and conduct during dating which will help them to avoid the dangers while benefiting from the social contacts.

Wise policies for dating

Before children reach their teens, their primary social relationships centre in the family. During adolescent years, these primary relationships expand to include a best friend and then a girl-friend or boy-friend. Dating is usually the next step in social development. Frequently the boy and girl who date have been brought together through friendship contacts. Choosing the right friends and associates, therefore, is basic to healthy social development and preparation for successful marriage.

Friendships made at church are likely to be more wholesome than those made at other places in

Traditional and Christian moral standards expect pre-marital c _____ and post-marital f _____.

(chastity, fidelity)

List some influences that are changing social opinion of this moral standard.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

A wise policy for dating is to choose the right f _____ and a _____.

(friends, associates)

²Evelyn Millis Duvall, Why Wait Till Marriage? New York: Association Press, 1965), p. 12.

the community. However, some young people attend church because their parents require them to do so, but they have no personal convictions or commitment to Jesus Christ. Their standards are no different from those of the world. Nevertheless, the best place to find friends is within the environment of the church. Choosing the wrong friends can wreck a boy's or girl's chances completely.

Some counsellors advise young people not to date anyone more than twice if they do not consider the person an acceptable companion in marriage. This advice does not mean that each date should have marriage as the ultimate goal. Rather, young people never know whether they are going to become infatuated with each other and develop emotional attachments which prevent objectivity in evaluation of character.

If a person's standards differ from those of his friends, he will not find happiness in associating with them. They will put pressure on him to conform to what they expect, and his yielding will lead to shame, guilt, and loss of self-respect. Friendships help one to learn how to get along with others, but the wrong friends will influence one to go against his standards. Those who develop friendships with the right kind of people tend to marry better mates and live more happily than those who lead a more isolated existence or associate with the wrong kind of people.

One should not date someone whose words or habits will bring embarrassment in the presence of others. There should be respect for the person with whom one associates in social dating. It is not necessary for a girl to accept the invitation of every young man. Dating should be selective.

Since there is the possibility that the relationship will develop rapidly and unexpectedly, Christian young people should date other Christians since the Bible instructs believers not to be yoked unequally with unbelievers. Non-Catholics should be careful about any kind of involvement with Catholics. This advice does not imply that Catholics are not good people, but their church does have certain requirements and demands that are incompatible with the religious practices of devout Protestants.

Wise young people plan specific activities for their dates. Temptations and dangers arise when partners are together for long periods of time without anything to do. Their association will be more wholesome if they avoid the type situations which lead to the downfall of others.

Attracting Interest

In most cultures, boys take the initiative in establishing social relations with girls. All that a boy has to do to date is get sufficient courage to invite a girl, who will likely respond, to a function of common

Another wise policy for dating is not to date anyone more than twice who would not be an acceptable m _____ e _____.

(marriage companion)

Another wise policy is to associate with those whose s _____ are similar to yours.

(standards)

One should date those whose w _____ and h _____ are acceptable.

(words, habits)

Christian young people should date other Christians because the Bible instructs _____ not to marry _____.

(believers, unbelievers)

Another wise policy for dating is to plan specific a _____ for dates.

(activities)

interest. Girls have a more difficult task. They must attract the interest of boys whom they consider acceptable for dating without being flirty or too aggressive. It is normal for young people to desire associations with the opposite sex by the time they are fourteen or fifteen years of age. The desire is as normal for the girl as for the boy, but society places the responsibility of taking the initiative upon the boy.

Girls mature from one to two years earlier than boys. Often they become impatient with boys of their own age and look to older boys for social associations. This practice may be a mistake unless they intend to marry at a young age. Boys of their own age finally catch up, and school and church structures are more likely to keep young people grouped according to ages.

Attracting interest and establishing social relationships between girls and boys require the same characteristics as the establishing of relationships at any age. Attention should be given to bodily cleanliness and neatness. Dressing with taste and modesty are important. A cheerful and positive disposition should be maintained; no one enjoys a gloomy person. Courtesy and consideration are not outdated. Each should be willing to listen to what the other says and not dominate the conversation.

Smoking and drinking do not attract the right kind of friends. They may attract companions but not the kind that one would want to marry. Profanity is not beautiful, nor does it show maturity. It is prohibited by the Word of God and reflects a lack of moral sensitivity, intelligence, and Christian character. Even slang expressions should be avoided. A person is known by his words. Jesus stated that "those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matt. 15:18). That is, words reveal a person's inner character and being. A person will attract the kind of persons that he portrays himself to be, a principle stated aptly in the proverb, "Birds of a feather flock together."

Social relations are strengthened by a person's being himself. No one likes to be deceived, and pretensions are shallow and usually easily detected. Some people spend all their time pretending to be someone they are not. Most people have undesirable qualities, but they can cultivate the right qualities. Consideration, generosity, cleanliness, neatness, tolerance, unselfishness, optimism, humour, enthusiasm, and vitality are attractive qualities in any person. On the other hand, some qualities which repel others are: jealousy, irritability, rudeness, temper, air of superiority, vulgarity, irreverence, lack of appreciation, insincerity, and untidiness.

No person is perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. Rather than denying the mistake or casting blame on someone else, integrity requires that the mistake be admitted and an apology be given. Honesty and straightforwardness bring respect.

List some characteristics which encourage social relations.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

List some additional characteristics that contribute to establishing of social relations between boys and girls.

Now list some qualities that hinder social relations.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

A person should not be interested only in attracting friends but in being a person who is worthy of the other peoples' friendship. Single young people may engage in lascivious living, but they do not want to establish a permanent relationship in marriage with such unworthy partners. However, many fail to consider that their promiscuous living makes them unworthy of a desirable marriage companion.

Selecting a Companion

Courtship is a more serious and deeper relationship with a person of the opposite sex. In some societies, it begins with "going steady." This relationship means the couple will not date others and indicates a tentative choice of a mate. Although "going steady" gives teenagers a sense of security by having someone available always for social occasions, it has the disadvantage of hindering the development of other friendships and narrows the social development of those involved. For older singles, going steady may be the first step towards engagement and marriage. Before a person becomes involved in a more serious relationship which moves towards marriage, certain matters should be considered.

Acceptable age and health

Although there is no set rule regarding the age of the man and the woman, the ideal seems to be for the man to be two or three years older than the woman. Since women mature earlier, they are ready for marriage at an earlier age than men. However, marriages have been successful when the woman is older, and others have worked in which the male is as much as fifteen years older, but wide spans in ages require greater adjustments. The social interests and vigour of a thirty-five year old man will differ greatly from that of a twenty-year-old woman. His sexual interests will begin to decline more rapidly after fifty, perhaps about the time her interest has been fully awakened. He will reach the age of retirement while she is still young enough to have numerous productive years ahead. On the average, men die at a younger age than women. A younger wife can expect more years of widowhood.

The average age for men at marriage is about twenty-three, and that of women is about twenty-one. These average ages may vary in different cultures. Teen-age marriages are less likely to be successful. Some do succeed, but many end in divorce. Often teenagers are not mature enough mentally and emotionally to be stable. Persons entering marriage should be old enough to accept responsibility and should have the ability and stability to provide for family needs.

Health is important because a sickly companion can prove to be a great handicap. Of course, sickness or physical handicaps often come after marriage, and the healthy companion can find some fulfilment in meeting

Why is it not good for teenagers to "go steady"? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

List four additional adjustments a couple has to face if the man is much older than the woman.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The ideal ages for marriage are around _____ for the woman and _____ for the man. At these ages they should be ready and capable of accepting r _____ and stable enough to provide for a f _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

the needs of the debilitated mate. A handicapped mate will likely hinder the accomplishment of certain plans, will place unusually heavy responsibilities in the home upon the healthy partner, and will place a financial strain upon the home because of medical needs.

Similar education and ability

Education and ability are important factors to consider in choosing a mate. The more education a man has the better he can provide for his family. In some societies, women are beginning to contribute equally with men in supporting the home. Even though a wife does not assume responsibility for financial support, her educational level should approximate that of the husband if there is to be intellectual compatibility, full communication, and mutual respect. If her educational level is much below that of her mate's, he may consider her role to be that of a servant and there may be greater temptation for him to be attracted to another woman on a professional level. Intellectual ability sometimes compensates for the lack of equality in education. It makes possible individual progress and allows for mental and cultural compatibility between husband and wife.

In some cultures, attitudes concerning the role of men and women are changing. In the past, women were strictly mothers and homemakers and were not considered to need a formal education. They learned cooking, housekeeping, and motherhood from their own mothers. Men also learned trades as apprentices, often from their fathers. Farmers and carpenters were trained on the job. Modern professions require more formal education. Since women are beginning to enter various professions, their training must be appropriate to their future plans. The level of the wife's education is no longer limited to cultural enrichment but is looked upon as essential for a profession. A man and woman who plan to marry should consider each other's education and ability in connection with their concepts of each other's roles as partners.

Common interests and ideals

Interests and ideals should be considered in choosing a mate. If a man has an interest in sports, he will find greater compatibility with a wife who has like interests. A person who has been called to the ministry should consider carefully the calling and interest in religion of the person whom he is thinking of for a companion. The ministries of many men have been destroyed by companions who were not sympathetic or dedicated to such a vocation. The relationship between companions is so intimate that the attitudes and actions of one affect greatly the vocational performance of the other.

Compatible religious convictions

Religion is very important in the harmony of husband and wife. The ideal is for both to be members

It is good for the wife to be on about the same educational level as her husband if there is to be--

*i _____ compatibility,
full c _____, and
mutual r _____.*

(intellectual, communication, respect)

In marriage, the attitudes and actions of one affects the v _____ performance of the other.

(vocational)

of the same church. Spiritual harmony is achieved in some relationships in which the companions are members of different churches with similar beliefs. There is serious question whether or not an evangelical Christian should marry a Roman Catholic. If both have strong convictions, strife will exist, and the spiritual growth of each will be hindered. The Catholic Church recognizes the seriousness of mixed marriages and discourages them. In the past, it has held that valid ceremonies were performed only by Catholic priests, and a Catholic who was married to a Protestant by a Protestant minister was excommunicated. In a Catholic-Protestant marriage by a priest, the Protestant must renounce any control over the religious instruction and activities of the children. These demands place a great strain on a marriage in which both partners have strong religious convictions and are loyal to their churches.

Even marriages between Protestants of greatly differing doctrines will often result in lack of spiritual harmony. Since marriage is of God, the spiritual foundations of the home are important. To marry into a situation in which these foundations are destroyed or greatly hindered is to jeopardize the success of the marriage.

A person who has accepted Christ as Saviour and has committed his life to the One who died on the cross for him will recognize that Christ has first place in his life. He will not desire to enter into a marriage relationship which will interfere with this priority. Those who "marry in the Lord" experience strength and support in their service to Christ rather than hindrance.

Similar social backgrounds

The social background of a potential mate should be considered seriously. Since companions will need to develop common interests and goals, they will need to be sure that their interests and values are not too divergent. A person from a rural and agricultural background will have different views and philosophies from one of a city and industrial background. One whose parents are wealthy will have different views, tastes, and interests from the person with a background of limited economic resources. For example, if a young man of a poor family marries a young woman of a wealthy family, he likely will be unable to provide for her richer tastes. She will not know how to economize in order to live on the more limited income which he provides. The pride and self-esteem of the young man will be damaged if the young woman looks to her parents for economic help. Yet if they are unable to live within their economic means, great pressure will be placed on the marriage. A girl with ability to sew and manage a household contributes significantly to the economic success of the home, and these abilities should not be overlooked.

Why is it wise for an evangelical Christian not to marry a Catholic?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Marriages of Christians who are members of churches with greatly differing doctrines often result in lack of s _____ harmony.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Those who "marry in the Lord" s _____ and s _____ each other in their Christian service.

(strengthen, support)

As you read, list some examples of areas of social background which can affect adjustments in marriage.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

When young people of different nationalities or races consider marriage, they should be aware of the vast cultural differences which separate them. Satisfactory adjustments can be made only if both are flexible and adaptable. Each must be able to respect the other and feel respected by the other.

Much can be learned about the personality and ideals of the potential mate by visiting in his or her home. The happiness and mood of the parents' homes will be carried over into the home of the newly married. The tidiness of the house, especially the boy's or girl's room, will indicate what to expect in house-keeping. The girl's participation in the preparation of the meal and the activities of the family at the table will reveal the responsibility that each family member has been taught to assume and the orderliness in the home. Courtesy and good manners become evident in the family circle.

Adaptability

Regardless of the number of compatible areas shared by a couple, many adjustments will be necessary because of the intimacy of relations within marriage. Adjustments can take three possible directions: the husband will dominate and require the wife to do all the giving; the wife will dominate and require the husband to do all the giving; each will move towards a position that is agreeable to both. The first results in the wife's becoming a servant rather than a companion. The second results in the husband's becoming a servant rather than the leader of the home. Voluntary servitude is fine, but forced servitude denies companionship. The word companionship suggests the latter direction. During social dating, each person should evaluate the adaptability and attitudes indicating a willingness to cooperate.

Emotional maturity

A mature person exhibits insight and foresight in his thinking and is able to evaluate himself realistically. He is able to anticipate the results of his actions, make sound judgements and decisions, demonstrate a sense of independence, and assume responsibility for his own behaviour. The mature person is able to give as well as receive love and affection. He does not act impulsively but shows flexibility, control, and adaptability. Although no person is mature in every area, progress is made when he understands the causes of his immature actions.

The disposition, patterns of behaviour, and maturity in thinking and actions are of great importance in the making of a marriage. Persons with neurotic personalities or psychopathic tendencies have difficulty making adjustments in human relationships. A girl, for example, who is strongly tied to her mother lacks self-reliance and goes home at the slightest disagreement with her husband. A man may fly into a rage when he meets obstacles, or he may try to escape his

As you read these first two paragraphs, continue to list some examples of areas of social background which can affect adjustments in marriage.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Two qualities necessary for making adjustments in marriage are:

a _____
c _____

(adaptability, cooperation)

List some characteristics of a mature person.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

responsibilities or feelings of inadequacy by resorting to alcohol. Persons bring into marriage a fairly fixed personality structure that will not be changed much by marriage. Men and women who are kind, friendly, cooperative, and tolerant are likely to make good husbands and wives. The irresponsible and domineering in single life will carry those traits into marriage.

Seeking God's Will

Committed Christians realize that they are designed by God for a purpose; therefore, God has a plan for each which includes every activity and relationship of life. When young people face the serious decision of choosing a lifetime mate, they recognize the possibility of human error. They may have considered carefully the qualities of a good mate, yet they are unsure whether they have evaluated accurately the person whom they are considering. There is always the possibility of a person's attitude changing after marriage which will result in a change of the total personality. Also, it should be realized that most young people put their best self forward when dating and try to hide undesirable characteristics.

Young people need to know that God's plan for their lives includes the companion with whom they will serve. God wants the very best for His chosen people. His Word gives instructions concerning whom a Christian should marry: "Only in the Lord." He has promised to answer prayer that is according to His will and in faith. If God's guidance is requested, He will lead the person in this important matter of choosing a companion. Since He has infinite wisdom, He never makes mistakes. Some young people fail to ask for God's guidance, fearing that He will disapprove of the person they have decided to marry. This course of action is foolish. Everyone needs the heavenly guidance that only God can give, and doing His will brings a greater happiness than one is able to gain through following his own personal desires.

Engagement

Engagement is a step beyond going steady in the journey to marriage. It begins when the young man and young woman agree to marry and set a tentative date. A commitment by each to marry is made and definite plans begin to be made. Usually the boy proposes to the girl, but often the matter has been discussed previously in general terms. At this time, all matters concerning marriage and life together should be discussed frankly. It is a time for growing towards each other and for testing the satisfaction derived from being devoted solely to each other. However, the major adjustments will come after the couple has united in marriage. The couple should re-evaluate the advisability of marriage. Sometimes engaged couples decide

One reason for seeking God's will in choosing a lifetime mate is the recognition of the possibility of h _____ error.

(human)

Another reason for seeking God's will is the recognition that God's plan includes the right c _____.

(companion)

List four purposes of the engagement.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

as they approach the wedding date that they have made a mistake. It is better to break the engagement than to have a bad or broken marriage. The final decision to marry is made during the engagement.

The length of engagement may vary according to the length of time the individuals have known each other previously. Some circumstances, such as job requirements and educational plans, may cause marriage to be delayed and the time of engagement to be extended. Sometimes marriages are delayed to enable the couple to secure a residence. Occasionally, one or the other must pay off debts before it would be wise to assume family responsibilities. Ordinarily, both extremely long and short engagements are unwise. During long engagements, the couple will experience the strain of resisting the more intimate relationship. Short engagements do not allow sufficient time for them to re-evaluate their lifetime commitment to one another.

During engagement, the couple will want to discuss the roles of the husband and wife in marriage and the place where they will live. It is wise for a couple to discuss sources of income, whether or not the wife will work, how the income will be handled, and a tentative budget. The couple also should agree on church affiliation and their plans for spiritual growth as companions. Usually they will discuss plans for having children, providing for them, and views of discipline.

Well in advance of the tentative wedding date, the couple should contact their minister to arrange for the use of the church building and his services in conducting the wedding ceremony. More and more ministers are requiring extensive counselling sessions; therefore, definite plans should be set early enough to allow completion of the required sessions. Some ministers require as many as six, and these may extend over a period of six weeks or more.

Since marriage is a lifelong commitment, couples should be willing to spend more time in study and preparation for it. If it were not for counselling sessions, many couples would enter marriage without understanding one another, how to make adjustments in marriage, and the sexual nature and needs of their companions. Many couples succeed in working out adjustments and establishing strong relationships apart from preparatory counselling sessions; however, most would have benefited greatly from them and would have found the adjustments easier had they known more about the various areas of companionship.



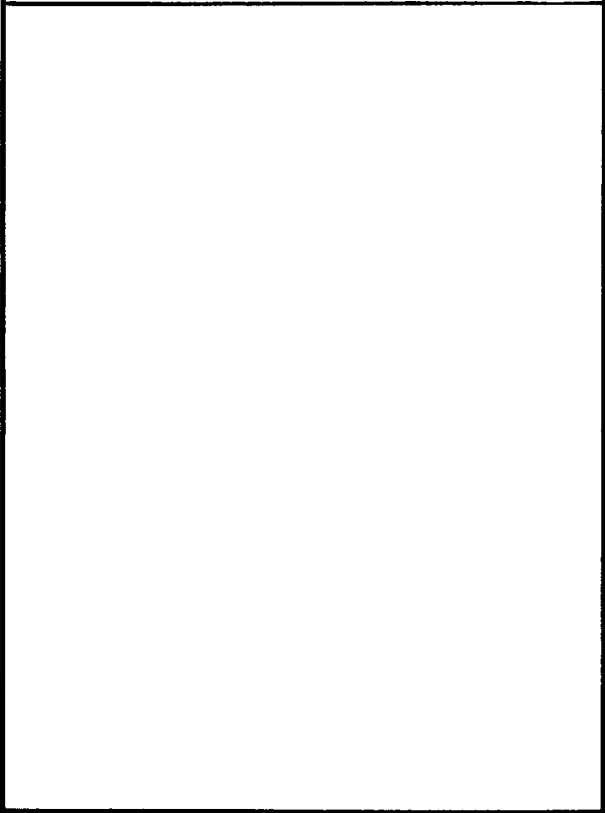
Match length of engagement with its disadvantage.

<i>long</i>	1. <i>insufficient time for re-evaluation of lifetime commitment to each other</i>
<i>short</i>	2. <i>strain of resisting more intimate relationship</i>

(long—2, short—1)

List six matters which the engaged couple should discuss.

(Compare your answers with the text.)



Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Do the following exercise.

1. How were marriage partners selected in the Old Testament? _____

2. What policy have Christians followed in the selection of marriage partners? _____

3. What freedom must be allowed in cultures that allow young people to choose their own mates?

4. Define dating. _____

5. Why is petting by young people dangerous? _____

6. How have moral standards of society changed? _____

7. List five policies for wise dating. _____

8. List six positive and four negative characteristics which contribute to establishing social relations between boys and girls. _____

9. Why should teenagers not "go steady"? _____

10. What adjustments should be considered in the marriage of an older man to a young woman?

11. Suggest an ideal age for the marriage of men and women and explain why. _____

12. Why should the educational level of a wife who does not work outside the home approximate that of her husband? _____
13. Why is it better for an evangelical Christian not to marry a Roman Catholic? _____

14. Give two examples of how different social backgrounds affect adjustments in marriage. _____

15. What is the best approach to adjustments in marriage? _____

16. List five characteristics of a mature person. _____

17. Why should God's will be sought in choosing a lifetime mate? _____

18. List some purposes of the engagement. _____

19. What are the disadvantages of extremely long and short engagements? _____

20. List six subjects the couple will want to discuss during engagement. _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).

Read pages 13-18 and 19-23 in The Marriage Affair, edited by J. Allan Petersen, and answer the following questions.

1. List eight reasons Evelyn Duvall gives for the increase in young marriages.
2. State how an early marriage limits development of full personality potential. List four reasons why young marriages are unstable. Give four pressures or problems of the young married.
3. According to Duvall, what five indications are there of one's being mature enough to marry?
4. Outline the teachings concerning marriage which Stephen F. Olford finds in Genesis 1 and 2.

Advanced activity (Level 3).

Read pages 1-8 and 9-12 in The Marriage Affair, and do the following assignments.

1. Read "Opportunity Unlimited!" by Petersen. Write an essay on reasons to be concerned about marriage in your country, and what the church should do to strengthen the home.
2. What similarities does Louis Evans see between the Roman Empire and contemporary society?
3. According to Evans, whose business is marriage?

Seminar Discussion

1. Is the contemporary pattern for selecting a mate superior to the pattern in Old Testament times? Why?

2. How do young men and young women become acquainted in your culture, and how can the church improve the methods now being followed?
3. What are the dangers involved in the process of a young couple's becoming acquainted in preparation for marriage?
4. What characteristics of boys and girls are socially attractive?
5. Why should a young man consider health, education, interest, religious conviction, social background, and emotional maturity in selecting a future companion?
6. How long should an engagement last?