Preparing for Dating & Marriage

Next to your children's relationship with the Lord, the next most important relationship will be with their future spouse.

Therefore, it is vitally important for parents to know what principles to teach their children regarding dating and marriage.

1. **Teach your children the basic virtuous characteristics that will <u>prepare</u> them for dating and marriage**.

   Before you can adequately teach your children, you must have a Biblical definition of love, of marriage and its purpose and permanence, and of role responsibilities.

   *The best way to prepare your children for marriage is to set an exemplary model in your marriage.

   Teach your teenagers about:

   a. Genuine <u>love</u> (I Cor. 13)

   b. Accepting God's <u>timing</u> and <u>will</u> (Gen. 29:20; Prov. 3:5-6; Ja. 4:15)

   c. The importance of <u>good friendships</u> (I Cor. 15:33)

   d. <u>Priorities</u> (Mt. 6:33)

      Parents must explain to their teen what to look for in a mate.

      --Godliness over glamour
      --Personal character is priority over personal appearance (Prov. 31:30)

   e. Design for <u>sex</u> in <u>marriage</u> and standards of <u>moral purity</u> (I Thess. 4:1--8; Heb. 13:4; I Cor. 7:1-5; Prov. 5:18-21; Ps. 101:3)

      When children enter puberty and begin to have questions regarding sexual behavior, parents cannot neglect this topic. If children don't learn of God's design, standards, and purpose for the marital, physical expression of love from their parents, they will often go to their peers and the world for answers.

If parents answer questions that their children ask about reproduction or sex, and the parents answer frankly, unashamedly, and discreetly, this will result in the child feeling free to come to the parents with other questions and thus keep communications open.

2. Teach your children about <u>proper courtship</u>:

a. Teach your teens that serious dating is for "mating" (marriage).

(Serious dating should not precede the age of 18, or until both are mature enough and ready to manage the responsibilities of marriage.)

b. Because God created man as the initiator and woman as the responder, the young man should assume <u>leadership</u> in the dating relationship. He is the one who <u>asks</u> the girl for a <u>date</u>. In fact, girls should not make any kind of attempt to <u>initiate</u> a relationship with a boy (i.e. girls should not walk up and start a conversation, make phone calls, etc.).

c. What procedure should Christian girls follow in a dating relationship?

1) Remember you are under the authority of your father until you marry (I Cor. 7:36-38).

2) Before starting to date, meet with your father (whether or not he is a Christian) and share with him your goals for marriage: that yours will be the kind of marriage God wants, and thus be the happiest possible.

3) Agree that any boy who wants to date you must first ask your father for permission. This simply requires saying, "I am honored that you have asked, but before I can give you an answer, you will have to ask my father." This takes all the pressure off the girl and creates these benefits:

a) It makes the boy appreciate you more because what is easily gotten is not usually appreciated.
b) It decreases the temptation of the boy to mistreat you. If he thinks you are completely on your own, it increases the risk that he will try something.

c) It proves to the boy that your father loves you.
d) It gives your father a chance to discern the boy's intentions. A woman is more affected by actions than by motives, but a man discerns first the motive.
e) It places the boy under your father's counsel, which is exactly where he should be if the relationship grows into marriage.

4) Agree that anytime a fellow starts talking to you about marriage you will say, "If you are thinking about marriage, you had better talk to my father." This is tremendously important because so often talk about marriage is just camouflaged lust.

3. Teach your children about discerning <u>God's will</u>.

How can your children know who is the right one for marriage?

Follow God's principles for courtship:

a. Be submitted and obedient to the advice and discretion of your parents (Eph. 6:1-2).

b. Determine that you will date only <u>Christians</u> (I Cor. 7:39; II Cor. 6:14-18).

God forbids the intermarriage of a believer with a non-believer (SEE: Gen. 24:3-4, 28:1-2; Ex. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:3-4; Ezra 9:10-12; Neb. 10:30).

Examples of disasters caused by unequal yokes in marriage:

1) The sons of God married good-looking but godless daughters of men (Gen. 6:2).
2) Esau married two Hittite wives (Gen. 226:34-35).
3) Samson became betrothed to a Philistine woman (Jud. 14).
4) Solomon married heathen women (Neh. 13:26).

c. Determine that you will strive to **<u>be</u>** the <u>right one</u>, rather than focusing on meeting the "right one" (Rom. 12:1-2).

d. Be busy doing the general will of God, and He will guide you in the specifics of His will (Phil. 2:12-13; Prov. 3:5-6).

God doesn't move "parked cars"; rather, He steers us as we are busy ministering for Him (Acts 13:2).

e. Purpose in your heart that you will not defile yourself or defraud the one you date (I Cor. 7:1-2; I Th. 4:6).

f. Decide that the one you marry must enhance your ministry, not diminish or destroy it (Is she a "helpmeet" [Gen. 2:18] or a hindrance?).

g. Yield your plans to God's will in the vital area of dating and marriage (desire His will above all else) (Mt. 6:33).

h. Wait for God's timing (Eccl. 3:1).

4. Teach your children what to avoid in a dating relationship.

a. Avoid the "steady" relationship until the time is right.
(Have several friends and let God bring the right one alone in His time)

b. Avoid situations and circumstances that might involve temptations and trouble (don't be alone in secluded places).

c. Avoid physical involvement (lust can't wait until marriage; but true love can).