

AMERICAN COURTSHIP

Request: “Several years ago you taught a doctrine called “Right Man and Woman”. It dealt with God’s promise regarding marriage. Then you stopped teaching it. This has confused me regarding God’s promise of marriage.”

Response: I learned this doctrine from Bob Thieme, who taught it as part of courtship in preparation for marriage. Because I felt that it was that it was NOT a doctrine regarding marriage, but rather a doctrine of courtship in preparation for marriage (taken from the background of the American dating customs) I stopped teaching it as such.

- In **single status**, it is about finding a right or compatible marital partner not being a right a marital partner.
- In **marital status**, it is not about finding a right or compatible marital partner but being the right and compatible marital partner.

This lesson will study five aspects of the American custom of courtship in preparation for marriage.

1. Dating and courtship is an American custom of preparation for marriage not a biblical one.

The Bible teaches that marriage is a divine institution for the human race and not just for the believer (Gen.2:18-25; Matt.19:5; Eph.5:30).

2. During the Jewish age, parents arranged marriages between families for their children.

This was not a commandment of the word of God but something they did because of the messianic tribal system of the priest nation of Israel (Ex.19:5-6; Deut.7:3-4; Luke 2:1-12).

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the Jewish tribal system was no longer important especially to Gentile believers. The parental arrangement of marriages changed within the Gentile church based on different national customs like America.

Today in America little if any parental guidance is given to preparation of their children for marriage. They may give guidance to the wedding but not much to marriage itself.

My experience as a pastor over the past 40 years is that many of today’s youth of America do not want biblical counseling and guidance during dating or courtship or marriage.

3. I think the doctrinal confusion was in the interpretation of the word “right.”

Paul used the Greek word exousia (authority, power, right) for right. Vines says that this is a right possessed in virtue of the authority given by Christ (Vines, pg.534).

Exousia means a right based on the freedom to choose (volition). “Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Cor.9:5; 7:39)

You have the right to marry or not to marry. It is your choice. It is not a sin either way.

4. There is actually only one absolute right concerning the selection of a marital partner. Believers must marry believers (Christians must marry Christians.) (1 Cor.7:39; 9:5; 2 Cor.6:14-18).

Question: What if I married an unbeliever before I knew what the Bible taught or if one of us got saved after marriage? (1 Cor.7:12-16)

Answer: The biblical right is that you must marry a believer and maintain that spiritual status in order to fulfill the promises of marriage (Gen.2:22; Prov.18:22; Eph.5:22-33).

5. However, there are several relevant rights that should be considered during the courtship period.

These rights are known in counseling as identifying and developing compatibility for marriage. Some are obvious and other red flags. Here are three obvious ones.

- **Do not marry an unbeliever** (2 Cor.6:14-18).
- **Do not marry an improperly divorced person** (1 Cor.7:10-16; Matt.5:31-32; 19:7-9)
- **Do not marry a believer in reversionism** (2 Cor.6:14-18; Matt.22:29)

Let me mention eight areas of compatibility for **red flag warnings** before marriage (1 Pet.3:1-7).

- **Spiritual** Saved, spiritual, carnality, reversionism, church
- **Social** Social graces, family, friends, fun.
- **Educational** Intellectual interests and communication (talking to and not at or down, name-calling)
- **Economical** Working, spending, saving, investing
- **Values** View of life, person, children, parents, family, marriage
- **Emotional** Temper, jealousy, tantrums, extreme anger, physical or emotional abuse, neurotic
- **Physical** Exercise, health, eating, appearance, house cleaning, drugs or alcohol
- **Sexual** Courtship should be a time of SOUL touching and not BODY touching – “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside his body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?” (1 Cor.6:18-19)

**“Now concerning the things about which you wrote,
it is good for a man NOT to touch (sexually arouse) a woman.
But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife,
and let each woman have her own husband.”
(1 Cor.7:1-2)**