Dating into Marriage

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This text speaks about the beginning ordinance of marriage and tells us of the importance of getting to know our spouse, prior to marriage. The act of becoming "one flesh" through marriage, speaks clearly of the need for us to have a period of dating before we join in marriage and become "one flesh." Dating is a period for us to determine if we are ready to become "one flesh" through marriage and this process is vital to the success of married life. Often, dating is seen as a period to attract a mate and to do thoughtful and extremely nice things to keep this mate. Although, these are things which are vital to dating and a marriage, they often do not go deep enough. If we think about becoming "one flesh," we need to make sure our attitudes, values and beliefs align with our spouse's and that we be in continual communication to make sure they remain so, with the help of the Lord.

Dating in today's world is often seen through the eyes of lust, which clouds the intent of becoming *"one flesh"* and leads us away from having conversations around our attitudes, values and beliefs. 1 Peter 2:11 speaks of this; it says, *"Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."* Dating is the process of interacting and getting to know each other to ultimately find a spouse. So, in this sense, dating is the preparation for marriage, and this should always be the intention of dating. If the intention of dating is to merely hang out or satisfy the lust of the flesh, then we are dating for the wrong intentions, and this will have repercussions in our married life. So, when we are preparing to date, it is important to be who you are and to not disguise yourself behind fake personalities or appearances, which is something spoken of in 1 Peter 3. If you are a young man or young woman who is preparing to date, make sure you know who you are, know what questions you want answered, and know what you are looking for in a marriage partner, but most importantly seek after someone who you can pray together with: *"Being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).* Dating into marriage is an intentional process by which one determines if he/she can live with a person in married life. A question to ask yourself when you are dating, "Will I be able to continue to date this person in my marriage?" If the answer is "no" then you need to find another person who you are compatible with. The things we do when we are dating should not stop the moment we get married, but rather they should continue into our marriages. So in this sense, never stop dating your wife or husband when you decide to become "one flesh" in Holy Matrimony.

Dating into marriage or how we should continue to treat each other in marriage is mentioned in Ephesians. *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Ephesians 5:25-29).* These verses speak clearly to how we should be treating each other in marriage. The husband as the head and the wife as the body, which is something we can visualize very clearly given that we all have a head and a body. Think about this when we are in our relationships: "Is this how I would treat my body?" or "Is this how I would treat my head?" This should be our guide in our interactions with each other.

Now, when we began this article, we wrote about a scripture verse from Genesis, which actually took place before the fall when man and woman were first created, seeing each other's nakedness was not sinful. Marriage today, in that regard, is still the same as before the fall, but now we are beset with sin and temptations which enter the marriage to break it down. We have anger, bitterness, rage, lust, negative ideas, temptations, and many other enticements trying to infiltrate the marriage bond. The outside pressures continue to become greater and greater, and the marriage bond continues to be broken down by world conformity. This speaks emphatically to the need for us to continue to communicate with our spouses concerning the things we are struggling with and to forgive each other and grow together in the marriage bond. Ephesians 4: 31-32 speaks of this forgiveness and urges us to continue to be compassionate towards each other despite the infiltration of the world. If we can be intentional about setting time aside each day to talk with our spouse and to pray with our spouse, the marriage bond will continue to grow with the Lord's blessing. *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5).*

Dating into marriage means we need to continue to work hard throughout our marriage and to treat marriage as a bond, which needs to be prayerfully nurtured and cherished. Remember the word together, or "one flesh" means we are being intentional about spending time together, talking things over together, being solution focused together, mending things together, forgiving each other together, and in all things being together in love. Grow your love together and the marriage bond will strengthen, but *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).* So, dating is the process of coming together and marriage is the act of being together and both are "active" for a reason. We must make sure we are investing in dating and marriage with the correct intentions. We must date to find someone to marry and continue to woo our spouse in marriage to enrich the marriage bond; both take tremendous work!

- Article Written by Elim Support Group Members
- August 2019