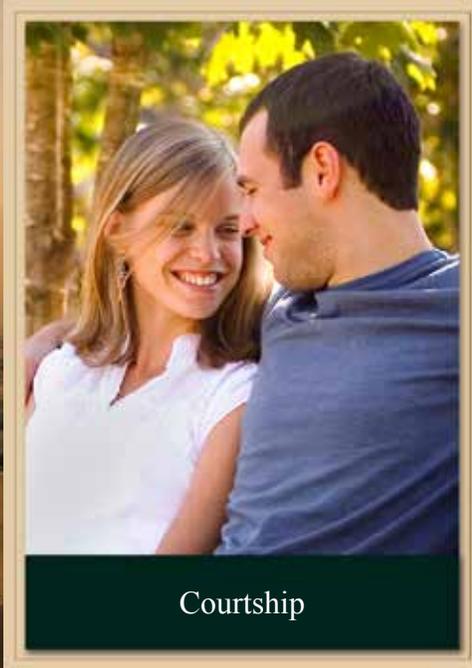


# The Life Cycle: Courtship



Courtship

The **Q**ology  
of the **B**ody for families  
& single people  
plus Family Chastity Formation in Virtue & Purity of Heart

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Universal Truths about Human Sexuality for People of All Ages  
With extensive references to the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church

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# Honorable Courtship

## What the Church Says

**675** “In a positive and prudent way, parents will carry out what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council requested: ‘It is important to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise; in this way they will be able to engage in honourable courtship and enter upon a marriage of their own’” (TMHS 94. The imbedded quote is from *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [December 7, 1965], 49).

**676** The Church knows that the social structures supporting honorable courtship have broken down in many areas: “Therefore, the ways and means must be ‘invented’ for the ongoing formation of adolescents in the period preceding engagement which follows the stages of Christian initiation. Exchanging information about the most appropriate experiences in this regard is extremely useful. Families joined together in the parishes, institutions and different forms of associations, help create a social atmosphere in which responsible love will be healthy” (Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage* [May, 13, 1996], 31).

## Wisdom of Parents

**677** Courtship is a period of time when a man is courting a woman or seeking her affections with the specific hope or declared intention of marriage. When special affection and mutual attraction develops beyond the stage

of friendship, the rules of chastity are especially important to observe and maintain an honorable courtship. A young man or woman—or any man and woman at any age for that matter—should only allow chaste physical gestures and emotional affection to be shown if engagement and marriage are clearly intended in the immediate future.

**678** Honorable courtship is very different from dating, going steady, hooking up or “casual” relations where sexual feelings, emotions and physical acts of affection are expressed with no thought, intention or readiness for marriage. Many parents think it is normal to allow their children to date or act on exclusive sexual attractions in puberty, adolescence and young adulthood. They accept the idea that kissing, holding hands, embracing, or dancing closely together outside of marriage is just harmless fun, a rite of passage or a good learning experience.

**679** Church teaching, Sacred Scripture, and now numerous scientific studies point out the foolishness and extreme danger of these kind of dating relationships. Basic common sense says that when a young man and woman begin to express sexual affections toward one another by spending too much time alone, those actions will quickly lead to further sexual relations. Premarital sexual affections and relations are sinful; and sin brings disintegration, disease, depression and death into one’s spirit and body. If unconfessed, the state of mortal sin could lead to eternal separation from God.

**680** Maintaining chastity in an honorable courtship must replace that concept of dating

which permits exclusive sexual affections and relations among unmarried people (who mutually use one another in order to experience pleasurable feelings or to satisfy selfish needs). This kind of dating actually destroys true love while honorable courtship builds up true love.

**681** A practical code of conduct during courtship has been almost completely lost in many societies, and is unfamiliar to others, so the Church acknowledged that the ways and means of remaining chaste during the period of courtship will have to be “reinvented” or reestablished by parents. Parents and families must lead the way in this area. Some things to consider include forming Catholic family associations to exchange information, establishing social rites for courtship based on Christian initiation, providing a social and communal atmosphere of like-minded families to establish or rebuild the culture based upon chastity and holiness, and reinforcing a moral code of conduct for interpersonal relationships during courtship.

**682** During courtship—as a particular friendship is developed with the clear goal and possibility of engagement—young adults will need the guidance of parents to integrate the seven pillars of family chastity formation to help them clearly determine if their vocation in life is marriage or virginity for the sake of the Kingdom. The formation of conscience can be greatly facilitated by the growing body of Christian literature promoting honorable courtship, and by seeking the spiritual assistance of parents, friends, adults and priests committed to God’s plan for courtship (and by avoiding those people who compromise on the rules for chastity in premarital relations).

**683** As young men and women learn how to subject themselves in obedience to God and legitimate authorities, chaste affections and love will be able to develop in right order as well. Obedience to the authority of parents and the Church by young people manifests itself in the participation in church activities and in their respect for and involvement of parents and family in the courtship process. It is important for a young man and woman to have dinner with and visit each other’s family with an openness to parental insights; and to seek the wisdom of Church teachings and pastors in regard to their compatibility and readiness for the vocation of marriage. During courtship a young man or woman should discern clear signs within their hearts—and from friends and family—that indicate whether they have a vocation to marriage or not.

**684** Practical acts of sacrificial love and self-denial in imitation of Christ’s sacrificial love will help young men and women attain self-mastery and self-control. This discipline is required to rightly order the body and spirit’s desires for pleasure and selfish inclinations, and thus develop the virtue of temperance. In this stage of courtship, a young man or woman tries to prove to the other their worthiness as a potential spouse; that they can be trusted, control their appetites, be temperate, modest and generous; in short, they demonstrate to one another whether they have all the virtues which enable them to love sacrificially and in an unselfish manner. Courtship is a time of testing to see whether one is self-absorbed or full of self-love; or, if he or she is capable of being concerned and attentive to the needs and feelings of others.

Putting this Knowledge to Work

685 Purpose of courtship

- To determine if you have a life together in marriage as husband and wife.
- A period to discern if your vocation in life is marriage or a single life consecrated to God.

686 Sharing your general expectations for life during courtship

What are your lifetime goals? List the top seven things that are your priorities in life in their order of importance and consider sharing them with your potential spouse:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

687 Setting boundaries that support chastity before marriage

M W (Man/Woman: Check box if affirmative)

- Will you avoid situations that would violate purity and chastity?
- Will you avoid situations that might cause temptation?

What are specific situations to avoid?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- Will you establish boundaries for intimacy before marriage?

What are they?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- Will you respect these boundaries for intimacy during courtship?
- Will you be vigilant and not cross the line of inappropriate behavior?
- Will you establish appropriate modesty in your dress code and abide by it?

What standards of dress will you follow?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- Can you agree on appropriate displays of affection during courtship?

What are they?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- Will you set entertainment standards that support chaste living?

What are they?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**688 About matters of faith**

M W

- Is God first in your life?
- Are you and your friend both Catholic? If not, why would you want to enter into marriage with someone who you disagree with on matters of faith (being in love is not an answer)? Wouldn't this be a cause for division rather than unity in the marriage?
- Are you actively practicing your Catholic faith?
- Will you assume your duties and responsibility to raise and educate your children in the Catholic Faith?
- Are you using the Sacraments regularly, especially Reconciliation and Eucharist? If not, why not?
- Are you committed to living your faith after the wedding and throughout your married life? If not, why not?
- Do your beliefs about marriage and family correspond to Church teaching?
- Are you open to having children? (If not, this could invalidate the marriage)
- If regulating the number of children you have is an issue, are you willing to practice natural family planning? (Remember, contraception is a grave evil; a mortal sin)
- Will you remain faithful to all of the official Church teachings?
- Are you convinced of the need to pray together everyday?
- Will you establish daily family prayer in the home after your wedding?
- Are you willing to tithe to the Church including time, talent, and treasure?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**689 Do your views conform with Church teaching on issues such as:**

M W

- Cohabitation?
- Abstinence from premarital sex?
- Homosexuality?
- Artificial birth control?
- Sterilization?
- Abortion?
- Adultery?
- Divorce?
- Surrogate motherhood?
- Designer babies?
- In vitro fertilization?
- Embryonic stem cell research?
- Cloning?
- Euthanasia?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**690 What are your views on other moral issues?**

- Capital punishment
- Chastity throughout life
- Entertainment
- Alcohol
- Illegal drug use
- Pornography
- Virginity

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**691 Emotional and psychological issues**

M W

- Are you abusive (physically, emotionally, verbally and so forth)?  
Why?
- Are you an addict (pornography, alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, etc.)?
- Do you have problems controlling your anger?
- Are you self-absorbed?
- Are you spoiled and selfish?
- Do you have problems with bitterness towards another person?
- Are you co-dependent?
- Do you need to dominate and/or control other people?
- Do you have episodes of depression?
- Do you have unresolved grief issues?
- Are you a hateful, spiteful or resentful person?
- Have you been abused, wounded or scarred in life?
- Do you mistrust other people without cause?
- Are you insecure and unsure of yourself?
- Are you jealous?
- Do you have low self-esteem?
- Are you manipulative?
- Do you have a victim mentality that blames others for all your problems?
- Are you a perfectionist?
- Do you harbor resentment towards anyone?
- Do you have a spirit of rebelliousness?
- Do you hold grudges; are you unwilling to forgive?

- Are you too serious and/or sensitive about yourself?
- Do you ever break out in violent behavior?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**692 Family background of the person you intend to marry**

M W

- Is there a history or evidence of abusive relationships in the family?
- Are there any emotional or psychological issues in the family?
- Is the family honest and trustworthy?
- Are they emotionally needy at your expense?
- Are they responsible (or irresponsible)?
- Do they borrow money from you?
- Do they build one another up (or tear one another down)?
- Do they pray together?
- Do they try to run your life?
- Do you get along with your beloved's family?
- Are there additional problems such as drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, etc.?
- Do your beloved's parents get along with each other?
- Do they have good moral values?
- Do they attend church regularly?
- Will they respect your values and need for privacy?

Would your beloved's family be more important to them than your relationship with each other?

\_\_\_\_\_  
  \_\_\_\_\_  
  \_\_\_\_\_

### **693    Respect and manner issues**

M    W

Are you hospitable?  
  Do you demonstrate good table manners?  
  Do you respect your elders?  
  Do you respect other people's moral values?

Do you show common courtesy to other people?

Do you degrade or belittle other people?

Do you respect modesty in speech and dress?

Do you respect people of different backgrounds (race, religion, creed, class, and so forth)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
  \_\_\_\_\_  
  \_\_\_\_\_