

DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY, NORTHERN EUROPE

INFORMATION FOR INTENDING COUPLES

Courtship period is a time of preparation for the actual wedding day. Properly carried out, the intending couple deals with possible areas of friction and misunderstanding during this period. A long courtship is not encouraged because it generally runs into difficulties and often leads to a break of relationship. Six to nine months should be the maximum courtship period.

Courtship only starts after parents' consents have been obtained. Courtship is a time to know each another's past and present life, secular and Christian experiences and future spiritual and social aspirations. During courtship, the brethren should not be visiting each other lest the devil tempts them and then, when they yield, spoil their testimonies. Problems surely arise if people in courtship go into immorality and/or tell lies to the Marriage Committee in order to be joined in Holy Wedlock. The couples-to-be should avoid unnecessary closeness before and after the engagement, which may lead to defilement. *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."* (Hebrews 13:4).

The place to be used for courtship meeting should be the house of a Christian family with children, where people go in and out. The meeting place could also be an open school or church premises. In every case, the windows and doors with curtains must be left wide open. The responsible leader should be involved in choosing a meeting place.

A. COURTSHIP BRIEFING

1. It is necessary to see the parents of both the brother and sister. When you have to travel to see your parents for parental consent, NEVER travel alone. Go with a third party. If you are to stay overnight, do not sleep in the same place. The sister should sleep with the maidens and the brother should sleep along with the men there.
2. Prepare for each meeting beforehand. Divide topics between each other. Suggested topics for Bible discussion:
 - a. My ideal Wife (by the Brother)
 - b. My ideal Husband (by the Sister)
 - c. Money Management in the Home.
 - d. Extended Family, etc.
 - e. Practical Marriage plans: Thrash sensitive topics which could pose problems during marriage.
 - f. Combining Work with Home.
 - g. Working for God and Caring for the Home.
 - h. Career and Marriage.
3. Visitations to each other should not be done alone for any reason, whether the other party is living with parents or with other believers.
4. When there is a serious and urgent reason to go to the house of each other, go with another physically and spiritually mature believer. This will not allow the devil to take any advantage of you.

B. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following are necessary things to do when you are about to wed. It will be kind of you to help the organisers by cooperating with them as you adhere strictly to the additional information.

NOTE: Where reference is made to the Marriage Committee, the Senior Pastor or his delegates should take charge where a formal marriage committee has not been appointed.

1. It is compulsory that the brother and sister marrying should see the Pastor before the engagement and payment of the dowry except otherwise directed.
2. Necessary filing of notice should be done at least two months to the date of marriage and the Commune or Municipal's (henceforth referred to as Registrar's) certificate and given to the Marriage Committee seven days before the joining together. Filing could be done in any Marriage Registry nearer to your residence. If

- there had been any children before marriage, an affidavit should be affirmed for the Registry, copy Marriage Committee.
3. On the Sunday that the announcement is made in the Church (or published), the intending couple should keep a date with the Marriage Committee (Pre-marriage appointment). Do not wait for any other announcement before going immediately to see the Marriage Committee.
 4. The dowry has to be paid before the date of the wedding is obtained.
 - a. The dowry has to be paid before filing notice in the Court. A letter from the parents giving their go-ahead to join them in holy wedlock must be submitted.
 - b. At this stage, the filing of notice and printing of cards and programmes would be arranged.
 - c. Where dowry is not paid before notice is desired to be filed, a letter should be obtained from the parents of the sister.
 - d. The Group (Northern Europe), National or Region of the Church should be involved when any member goes there to pay dowry, even if the other partner is from a different denomination in the location.
 5. The Church's announcement of marriages should be done not later than 3 weeks to the wedding day.
 6. Together with the Registrar's Certificate, the would-be couples should submit the full names of their fathers and their occupation, full names of the Bestmen and Chief Bridesmaids.
NB: Married Sisters may not be chosen as Chief Bridesmaids.
 7. Rehearsal for the intending couples and their witnesses will be done at least 7 days before the wedding date. Emphasis is on punctuality, the presence of parents or the representative, especially the person giving the sister in marriage.

All previous forms of 'marriage' or relationships should be fully discussed with the Marriage Committee and with the proposed Spouse.

C. WEDDING DAY INVITATION CARDS

Where wedding invitation cards are to be used, the design should be simple and scriptural, projecting only what we preach and stand for. Worldly and carnal pictures should not be used on the cards. Church address and/or details should be on the card.

D. WEDDING DAY AND DRESS

"Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand." (Philippians 4:5)

Wear for Bride and Chief bridesmaid: Dress material may be plain or flowery and must be such that could also be continually worn to Church, business and leisure meetings including visitation.

1. No lace materials, that is, 'holed' material of whatever sort or attachment, or excessive trimmings or braiding.
2. The dress must be of reasonable length, enhancing Christian dignity when seated or standing. Neck area must be covered so as to enhance holiness during and after ministration, especially when kneeling down for prayers.
3. Dress material and style must be approved BEFORE purchase or production.
4. Head cover must not be superfluous (face should be visible), - could be English, Continental or Traditional, but not a Mexican or Nurse's Hat or Veil.
5. The entire outfit must be produced for inspection at least two weeks before the wedding day.
6. CAR: Befitting your present status (1 Timothy 6:6). Godliness (not worldliness) with contentment is great gain.
7. PHOTOGRAPHERS: Only the church's approved photographers are to be used – generally only one. No photographs to be taken outside the Church building after the wedding ceremony.
8. CHOICE OF BESTMAN: To be acceptable to the church.
9. CHOICE OF CHIEF BRIDESMAID: To be acceptable to the church.
10. SIGNING OF MARRIAGE REGISTER: Should be done by the by the Couple and two others, preferably one from each of the Couple (apart from the Minister and the Commissioner for Marriages).
11. Enough programmed pamphlets should be printed for the ceremony. 12 copies of such pamphlets are to be presented to the Marriage Committee 7 days to the wedding date.
12. All intending couples are to be conscious of the time of the services and make adequate preparation to be at the venue one hour before the commencement of the Service. The sister who is marrying are to ensure that

her father or the delegated person from the family, who should perform the 'giving out in marriage', is at the venue at least fifteen minutes before the commencement time.

E. RECEPTION

Duration: The reception should not last more than about 60 minutes. The reception should portray Christ. There should be no flamboyance or extravagance. *"Let your moderation be known unto all men"*, declares the Bible.

Choice of Reception Chairman: To be appointed by the Church.

Reception Programme: To be approved by the Church.

High Table Appointments: To be approved by the Church.

The Church strongly discourages the practice of calling many people from either side of the couples' families to the 'High Table'. This encourages worldliness. Ideally, the couple, their two witnesses and the chairman for the occasion are sufficient to sit at the 'High Table'. The relatives should be given places in the front rows, not the 'High Table'.

The couples should not arrange their reception halls before the wedding date and inform the officiating minister for announcement on the day of the wedding. Above all, confirm your marriage date earlier than necessary (at least 2 months before the date) and liaise with the Marriage Committee for other necessary things to do.

Toast of the Bride and Bridegroom: This should not be a time for praising the couple but a time to give testimonies of what Christ did in their lives. Christ is to be lifted up and He will draw all men to Himself. No alcoholic beverages are allowed at the Reception.

F. POST-MARRIAGE INTERVIEW

In order to assist the couples to adjust correctly without difficulty, a post-marriage interview will be conducted. Two weeks after the marriage, the couples should keep a date with the Pastor.

G. OBLIGATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Obligations of the Marriage Committee of the Church to the Pastor:

1. To check the salvation experiences of the brothers and sisters they interview.
2. If they do not appear to be born again they should send a confidential report to the Pastor without delay.
3. It is unfaithfulness to reveal the name of the brother or sister to the other party during interview. God cannot depend on such a person. Committee members must therefore take heed.
4. To arrange with intending couples to see the Pastor before the start of courtship.

Obligations of Area Leaders or responsible local leaders to the Marriage Committee:

1. To act on every slip from the Marriage Committee promptly and with a high sense of duty.
2. To report any member who refuses to respond to the invitation as it amounts to disobedience to a constituted arm of the Church.
3. To provide a conducive, mature venue for courtship meetings in full glare of people's eyes.
4. To help in the wedding arrangements of members of their locality and provide necessary moral support.
5. To visit newly married couples in the locality in order to assist them in adjustment.

H. CLARIFICATIONS

The Marriage Committee is available to answer and clarify anything that is not clear to those planning marriage.

I. DISCUSSION POINTS DURING COURTSHIP

1. FOUNDATIONS: *Psalm 11:3; Hebrews 5:13, 6:2.*
2. FUNCTIONS: *Responsibility of each – Ephesians 5:17-33.*
3. FAMILIES: *Parents, brethren and relations – Ephesians 6:1-4.*
4. FINANCE: *Income, budgeting and business – Matthew 17:27; Luke 19:3-23.*
5. FEEDING & FOOD: *Likes and preferences – Genesis 27:14.*
6. FURNITURE: *Taste, colour, conviction – Genesis 27:14; Philippians 4:5.*

7. FASHION: *Not extremist but modest; decent – 1 Tim 2:8-10.*
8. FAITH: *Past victories, present trials – 1 Tim 6:12.*
9. FRIENDS: *Keep mutual friends (mutually agreed). Discuss old and new – Proverbs 17:17.*
10. FAITHFULNESS: *Hide nothing from each other. Be transparent. – 2 Kings 12:15.*
11. FRUIT-BEARING: *Spiritual and Physical – Deut 7:14; Isaiah 54:1.*
12. FRICTIONS: *Settle before parting! Do not hinder personal or corporate prayer – 1 Peter 3:7.*
13. FAILURE: *Bear one another's failures! Do not be sensational – Gal 6:2.*
14. FORGIVENESS: *Retain your fellowship with God by forgiving your partner – Ephesians 4:32.*
15. FORWARD LOOKS: *Goals, Aspirations, Ambitions - Philippians 2:1.*
16. FORWARD MARCH: *Do not rest on old experiences. Add to your virtues – 2 Peter 1:5-10.*
17. FLAMING FIRE: *Be a minister i.e. a flaming fire in prayer. Preaching and praises – Hebrews 1:14.*
18. FEAR OF GOD: *There must be the fear of God in the home – 1 Peter 2:17.*
19. FELLOWSHIP: *Be available for praying, planning and praises – Psalm 122:1.*
20. FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST: *Calvary solves all problems – Romans 10:4.*
21. APOLOGY: *Admit quickly when you are wrong and apologise heartily; be not heady – Colossians 3:13.*
22. COMPLEXES: *Let grace remove all complexes: be united in all things – no separations – Ephesians 1:7-8.*
23. GIVING: *Transparent agreement without sentiment or subtlety by either party – 1 Timothy 6:10.*
24. PRAYER: *The family altar does not exclude prayer for your partner after marriage – 1 Peter 3:7.*
25. PRAISE: *Praise works wonders! Offer it copiously on one another's positives – 1 Timothy 4:3.*
26. PURITY: *How to keep yourselves pure during and after courtship – 1 Tim 5:22.*
27. SICKNESS: *Discuss past and present ailments if any – Philippians 2:25-30.*
28. STUDY: *Study the positives of each other. Help remove (not hurting) the negatives – 1 Thess 4:11.*
29. WORLDLINESS: *Do not use your worldly experiences in your courtship and marriage relationship.*