



## Courtship vs Dating: the Father's Role

We live in a culture that does everything it can to usurp the divinely appointed duty of the father. From *Married With Children's* Al Bundy to *Homer Simpson*, the last 20 years has produced a plumb line of weak, indifferent, and morally listless fathers who have garnered the attention of our youth by bumbling one-liners, and gutter humor. And what has lead to the receptivity of such a low class model? One could argue that it is the feminization of our culture, or the humanistic ideology of our schools. Certainly these things have played apart. I rather think, though, that much of this could be laid at the doorstep of the Church which has, by and large, drifted away from her responsibility to reflect the biblical model of the family. Unfortunately, even in many Reformed families, the role of the father has been too readily abdicated to the more spiritually sensitive mother. Family worship, if remembered at all, is too often lead by the mother. Likewise, discipline and parental counsel has also fallen to the one who was designed to be a *help meet* for the husband. What we have discovered in the past 40 years is an absentee father is not always absent in body, just in responsibility. Our Lord anticipates this modern trend when he says,

*"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."*

(1 Corinthians 11:3)

One day when history is rolled up as a scroll and we all stand before the tribunal of the Triune God, it will be the fathers of our families who will have to give an account for their actions.

B.M. Palmer & J. W. Alexander in their excellent book, *The Family*, writes,

*Under every government, the sovereignty must visit some recognizable head; there must be a last tribunal beyond which no appeal can lie. In the supreme sense, this belongs to God alone; but in the Family, which is constituted under His providence, the dread prerogative of representing His power attaches to the husband and father. He is delegated as the head of the domestic state, and his authority binds the house together.*

(p. 33. Sprinkle Publications)

So how does this relate to courtship? Father's are to be the covenant head of every relationship in the home, until such a time as there is a covenantal transferable to another head. The first giving away of a woman to a man is found in Genesis 2:21-24 and it was done by covenant transfer.

*And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

Many would glance by this text and never connect it with something like courtship. However, if we look closely, and let the Word speak, what we find here (in principle), is a giving of Eve to Adam, and a *cleaving* to her by Adam. For Adam, there was not a multiplicity of women from whom to choose. Some might say that this subtracts from our point and does not prove it. However, the omission of a choice of help meet is a strong indication that the LORD had one woman in mind for Adam, predetermined and foreordained. Secondly notice that right on the heels of this giving was a remarkable addendum. *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* Adam had no earthly parents, neither did Eve, but that

did not stop the Holy Spirit from inserting for future generations, the fact that the son will *“leave his father and mother”* so that he might *“cleave to his wife”*. Leaving here does not simply mean leave the house, but leave the covenantal oversight of the parents to form a new covenantal entity. There is no doubt that the LORD had in mind to set a biblical precedent for future generations. Parents are to be involved! Not on the periphery, but in the detail. Fathers are the covenant head of the home, and must retain the very place of headship until the question is answered,

*“Who gives this woman to this man?” “Her mother and I.”*

The father must be entirely involved in the molding of any relationship that belongs to his family unit.

Even in the similitude of the Gospel, when we speak of Christ, the great Husband of the Church, His bride was given to him by the Father (John 10:29; John 17:6, John 17:9, John 17:23).

The reverse is also true. A daughter is under the covenantal headship of her father until such a time as she is given to another. Deuteronomy 7 says,

*“Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.”*

Keep in mind, this is not an advocacy for arranged marriages, but a promotion of covenantal involvement on the part of the parents, and specifically the father. This is the God-ordained way of creating the marriage bond.

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