

Courtship by Principle

by Catherine Booth

Catherine Booth emphasizes the importance of taking time to know each other, having shared principles and qualifications, and practicing open communication and honesty in order to achieve a happy and successful marriage.

Scripture: Proverbs 18:22, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 5:33, Colossians 3:13

Topics: "Christian Marriage", "Relationship Principles"

Description

Catherine Booth emphasizes the importance of intentional courtship and marriage based on specific principles to avoid failure and misery. She highlights the significance of taking time to truly know each other's character, disposition, and beliefs before committing to an engagement. Booth stresses the necessity of seeking compatibility, shared religious views, mental strength, and mutual respect in a partner to ensure a harmonious and lasting relationship. She also shares personal resolutions and rules for a successful marriage, including transparency, unity in decision-making, and avoiding arguments in front of children.

Transcript

WHO can wonder that marriage is so often a failure when we observe the ridiculous way in which courtship is commonly carried on? Would not any partnership result disastrously that was entered into in so blind and senseless a fashion?

Perhaps the greatest evil of all is hurry. Young people do not allow themselves time to know each other before an engagement is formed. They should take time and make opportunities for acquainting themselves with each other's character, disposition and peculiarities before coming to a decision. This is the great point. They should on no account commit themselves until they are fully satisfied in their own minds, assured that if they have a doubt beforehand it generally increases afterward. I am convinced that this is where thousands make shipwreck and mourn the consequences all their lives.

Then again, every courtship ought to be based on certain definite principles. A fruitful cause of mistake and misery is that very few have a definite idea as to what they want in a partner, and hence they do not look for it. They simply go about the matter in a haphazard fashion, and jump into an alliance upon the first drawings of mere natural feeling regardless of the laws which govern such relationships.

In the first place, each of the parties ought to be satisfied that there are to be found in the other such qualities as would make them friends if they were of the same sex. In other words there should be a congeniality and compatibility of temperament. And yet how many seek for a mere bread-winner, or a housekeeper, rather than for a friend, a counsellor and companion. Unhappy marriages are usually the consequences of a too great disparity of mind, age, temperament, training or antecedents.

As quite a young girl I made up my mind to certain qualifications which I regarded as indispensable to the forming of any engagement.

In the first place, I was determined that his religious views must coincide with mine. He must be a sincere Christian, not a nominal one, or a mere church member, but truly converted to God. It is probably not too much to say that, so far as professedly religious people are concerned, three-fourths of the matrimonial misery endured is brought upon themselves by the neglect of this principle. Those who do, at least in a measure, love God and try to serve Him, form alliances with those who have no regard for His laws, and who practically, if not avowedly, live as though He had no existence. Marriage is a divine institution, and in order to ensure at any rate the highest and most lasting happiness the persons who enter into it must first of all themselves be in the divine plan. For if a man be not able to restrain and govern his own nature, how can he reasonably expect to control the nature of another? If his being is not in harmony with itself, how can it be in harmony with that of anybody else? Thousands of Christians, women especially, have proved by bitter experience that neither money nor position, nor any other worldly advantage, has availed to prevent the punishment that invariably attends disobedience to the command, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.'

The second essential which I resolved upon was that he should be a man of sense. I knew that I could never respect a fool, or one much weaker mentally than myself. Many imagine that because a man is converted, that is all that is required. This is a great mistake. There ought to be a similarity or congeniality of character as well as of grace. As a dear old man once said, 'When thou chooseth a companion for life, choose one with whom thou couldst live without grace, lest he lose it.' The third essential consisted of oneness of views and tastes, any idea of lordship or ownership being lost in love. There can be no doubt that Jesus Christ intended, by making love the law of marriage, to restore woman to the position God intended her to occupy; as also to destroy the curse of the Fall, which man by dint of his merely superior physical strength and advantageous position had magnified, if not really to a large extent manufactured. Of course there must and will be mutual yielding wherever there is proper love, because it is a pleasure and a joy to yield our own wills to those for whom we have real affection, whenever it can be done with an approving conscience. This is just as true with regard to man as to woman, and if we have never proved it individually during married life most of us have had abundant evidence of it at any rate during courting days.

For the same reason neither party should attempt to force an alliance where there exists a physical repugnance. Natural instinct in this respect is usually too strong for reason and asserts itself in after life in such a way as to make both supremely miserable, although on the other hand nothing can be more absurd than a union founded on attractions of a mere physical character, or on the more showy and shallow mental accomplishments that usually first strike the eye of a stranger.

Another resolution that I made was that I would never marry a man who was not a total abstainer, and this from conviction, and not merely in order to gratify me.

There were also certain rules which I formulated for my married life before I was married or even engaged. I have carried them out ever since my wedding day, and the experience of all these years has abundantly demonstrated their value.

The first was, never to have any secrets from my husband in anything that affected our mutual relationship or the interests of the family. The confidence of others in spiritual matters I did not consider as coming under this category, but as being the secrets of others, and therefore not my property.

The second rule was, never to have two purses, thus avoiding even the temptation of having any secrets of a domestic character.

My third principle was that, in matters where there was any difference of opinion, I would show my husband my views and the reasons on which they were based, and try to convince in favour of my way of looking at the subject. This generally resulted either in his being converted to my views or in my being converted to his, either result securing unity of thought and action.

My fourth rule was, in cases of difference of opinion, never to argue in the presence of the children. I thought it better even to submit at the time to what I might consider to be mistaken judgment, than to have a controversy before them. But of course when such occasions arose I took the first opportunity for arguing the matter out. My subsequent experience has abundantly proved to me the wisdom of this course.

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