

FALLING IN LOVE INTELLIGENTLY

In my first message in this series on BUILDING A HAPPY HOME, I spoke on "The Friendships Of Youth." We noted the fine friendships of youth which mean so much for the development of personality, the sharpening of social skills and the fostering of wholesome attitudes toward the opposite sex. We called attention to the fact that a thoughtful and sensible young person prefers a dating partner with physical and mental fitness, dependability or trustworthiness, pride in personal appearance and manners, cleanliness of speech and action, pleasant disposition and a sense of humor, and considerateness of others.

We shall now turn our attention to those relations between boys and girls which are known as dates. A date is a mutually agreed upon association of a boy and a girl, or a man and a woman, for a particular occasion or activity. Young people can date each other without either of them being seriously interested in each other. Dating is valuable for wholesome entertainment, personality development and education for future stages of involvement and commitment.

A matter of real concern to every normal youth is, "How can I get a date?" That which causes wise parents alarm is not that their children desire friends, but that they frequently lack judgment in their search for them. Their blunderings and indiscretions in this realm are often due to their lack of knowledge. To prevent a young person from having dates is to cause him to act unnaturally and to rob him of an invaluable experience he should have.

Frequently the question is asked, "How can I meet the right person?" This question may be answered in different ways.

I. By giving one's self a fair chance.

Many young people have profited greatly by the habit of inviting desirable young people into their homes in groups. Wise parents aid their children in planning for the entertainment of their friends. Young people who attend the church services and social gatherings connected therewith have an opportunity to meet others of their own age and standards. In summer camps and assemblies they will meet Christian young people who are interested in the finer things of life. In college young people meet under wholesome conditions.

II. By making one's self attractive.

Personal purity is the first prerequisite for attractiveness. Impurity will show in the eyes, the face, the conversation and the conduct. Neatness of dress is another prerequisite. Good manners are still another. Manners are an indication of good breeding and help to make the person. Bad manners, which may be due to lack of information, improper training or personal carelessness, often prejudice others against one from the start.

III. By acquiring a good disposition.

It is not possible for everyone to be handsome or beautiful, but it is possible to develop a good disposition. This may require effort, but it is always worth more than the price we pay for it. A good disposition is far more valuable in gaining and keeping friends than good looks.

IV. By being friendly.

Multitudes are concerned about their lack of dating opportunities and skills. Many young people have difficulties in getting dates. The question of getting a date is of individual concern. The first task of one who has been unsuccessful in making dates is to determine

the true cause of his failure. I have yet to meet a normal person whose failure to make friends was not due to some undesirable factor in his own life. The people who pass you by to date others do so because they have found in them characteristics you do not possess, but which you may cultivate if you desire.

One reason for lack of dates is a lack of effort to have them. One excuse which is given for failure to have dates is that of lack of money. A couple who enjoy each other's company may have a very pleasant evening together at very little expense. A girl who appreciates a boy's financial situation may find in his company more pleasure than money can buy. It is people and not money that make one happy. Girls who have refinement and culture, but no money, are more attractive to sensible young men than the endowed, boisterous, vain, extravagantly dressed prima donna.

It is invariably true that when one is not interested in having a date for a date's sake, that it will come. Anxiety for a date is sometimes indicative of selfishness, and that is repulsive to others. The person who would "give everything for a date" will never become the belle of the town, but those who give concern to the interests and enjoyments of others soon find people who are eager to know them better.

Doubtless you have watched a group of children at play. Two captains were selected to choose players for their sides. Some of the children crowded in front of them, stretching their hands high in the air and shouting, "Choose me! Choose me!" Those who made the most dramatic bid for acceptance were chosen last. A young person wants to select a partner whose interest goes beyond self.

A date is successful when it is mutually enriching.

As to going steady, there are some reasonable advantages, such as, the only way to get around, to rate invitations, social security, personal security, symbol of achievement and to get to know each other. At the same time, there are factors which indicate that going steady is not always wise. It lessens the opportunities for exploring the field. The chance of knowing a sufficient number of people of the opposite sex to make a real choice of a life partner comes during the dating period. It also limits one's scope of self-understanding. It may create the problem of one taking the other seriously while the second party is tired of the relationship.

In Genesis 29:15-20 we find the record of the courtship of Jacob. In Judges 14:1-2 we find an account of the courtship of Samson. The courtship of these two men was entirely different. In those early days mating was very much like it is today, in that some considered it a matter of very great importance and others gave it very little serious consideration. In the case of Samson, he went down to Timnath and became infatuated with a Philistine woman because of her physical attractiveness. He decided then and there that he would marry Delilah. He said to his parents, "Get her for me." They entreated him to choose a suitable young woman from among his own people. But, he only insisted more strongly, "Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." He did not treat marriage as a sacred matter, but as a trivial one, and afterwards paid the penalty of such foolish courtship. But, the love-making and courtship of Jacob was entirely different. He treated it as a sacred matter and was afterwards rewarded for the exercise of such good common sense.

Mark Twain told about having an old buggy and an older horse. He arrived to pay a social call even later than was usual for him. The girl in the case was angry enough to keep him waiting an unreasonable length of time while he chatted with her parents, and finally making her appearance went into a tantrum about the horse, saying, "I'm not going with you behind that old bag of bones--he is the worst looking horse I have ever seen." Mark looked at her and said calmly, "My dear and beloved sweetheart, when I drove up in front of this house that horse was a young and frisky colt." Yet even with his genius for making the best of a bad situation, you will notice that he took the precaution of making the parents a part of the scene and probably endearing himself to them by it.

Set up your ideal and fall in love with someone who approximates that standard. Your fall will be just as hard, and your life will be infinitely happier.