**COURTSHIP-Discussion Questions**

1. What is the difference between dating and courtship?
2. At what point should a person be willing to call off the courtship? What would some indicators be that it’s time to part ways?
3. Read verses 2:10-13. What is significant about the imagery here? How does this relate to courtship?
4. In our session on attraction, we discussed the importance of respect. In courtship, the key is trust. How is earned during this phase of the relationship, and why is it so crucial to a marriage?
5. Most scholars feel the “foxes” in 2:15 refer to sexual temptations that every couple encounters. Sexual passion will be a natural result of emotional intimacy. What are some practical steps to keeping the “foxes” out of the vineyard?

# SONG OF SOLOMON

COURTSHIP (2:8-3:5)

Courtship is the time when you begin to date one person exclusively with the purpose of determining if this is the person with whom you truly want to spend the rest of your life with. It is important that we understand courtship. A bad date can cost a little money, a little time and possibly a little annoyance but a bad courtship can cost you a piece of your soul – your emotional and mental substance. We will look at some guidelines for courtship shortly. Let’s review the scriptural references Song of Songs 2:8 – 3:5.

**ANNOTATIONS OF VERSES:** Song of Songs 2:8 – 3:5 (COURTSHIP)

(2:8-9) “*The voice of my beloved, Behold he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; he is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice*.” Their excitement grows as they get closer and closer – it is springtime and they are in “heat”. It is becoming the time for love to awaken. Desire for each other deepens.

(2:10-14) *“My beloved spoke, and said to me: “Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away! O my dove, in the clefts of the rock. In the secret places of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your face lovely*.” The reference to springtime symbolizes the time of new life. Solomon invites her to come with him - to be his exclusively. They want to discover all they can about each other through communication thus deepening their relationship. She is reticent (quiet; not revealing one's thoughts or feelings) and in a protected place. He assures her of his delight and asks her to trust him.

(2:15) *“Catch* ***us*** *the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.”* Catch us shows it is a joint-commitment. The relationship is described as a vineyard in which they are committed to protecting from the “**little foxes**” (*many scholars believe this has reference to pre-marital sex)* which will prevent the grapes from maturing.

(2:16) *“My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies.”* As a result of the commitment to purity she grows in security and respect for Solomon.

(2:17) “*Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether*.” She is longing for her man (young stag) to be

with her all night long upon the mountains of **Bether** (Hebrew meaning separation, a reference to her breasts). Passion will grow naturally during courtship so must restraint.

(3:1-3) *“By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought him, but did not find him. I will arise now, I said and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will seek the one I love. I sought him, but did not find him. The watchmen who go about the city found me; I said, ``Have you seen the one I love?”* She longs for him at night. Some scholars believe that verses 1-4 is her recurring dream of longing. I agree with this theory – as passion and longing grows at this stage most couples are consumed for each other in thought; day and night that even their subconscious mind gets into the “act”.

(3:4-5) “*Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases*.” She is still dreaming at this point and in her dream she introduces him to her mother thus hastening the wedding day but also demonstrating that home is a place of security for her and will not enter into a premarital sexual relationship even though passion is about to explode. The same longing and patience that nurtured their love earlier in their relationship is perhaps even more important now as their wedding day approaches. The charge is to wait until the right time to awaken love.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT COURTSHIP

Courtship can accurately be described as a growth experience because you are allowing and cultivating the growth of a relationship. Courtship shouldn’t be something you’re fighting and breaking up and getting back together with and trying just to limp to the altar. There should be easiness to that relationship. True courtship should be a smooth transition into engagement and then marriage.

***COURTSHIP IS A TIME:***

## For telling life stories in detail, for exploring life’s future in detail, for sharing freely and fully anything that you desire to share.

Through the dating process a level of trust and comfort has been established and a sense of safeness where one can now bare one’s soul, including revealing any dark secrets from one’s past. I have discovered that no matter how buried you believe a past error or sin may be, it will find a way of surfacing sometime in the relationship. Let Jesus be your role model as you hear

and respond to the past life of the person you love. If forgiveness and unconditional love are not flowing freely in your relationship, then Christ is not central to your relationship.

You should also share your heartfelt dreams and desire for the future. Especially if either of you have a call of God upon your life for ministry or missions.

It is also important to realize that you can share too much, too soon. Only share to the extent of the level of trust that has been established. Some people will tell you their life stories within the first fifteen minutes of meeting you. Courtship is not to be rushed; exploring the depths of another person takes time. P roverbs 25:16 says, *“Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit.”* Too much, too soon can make you sick.

## To Share Expectations of each other up front

Your spouse is not your parent. Wives your husbands are not your father and will probably not do things like your father – the same goes for husbands that think their wives are simply replacement mothers. You need to evaluate each other's strengths to work together to make the household run smoothly. Roles and responsibilities should be discussed. Children and methods of discipline should be discussed. You can establish rules as you go if you make a commitment to communicate effectively!

## To Be True to Yourself

A good courtship should bring out the best in you and allow you to express yourself fully without feelings of recrimination or apology. Each of us should be true to our unique gifts and courtship should allow you to express it. If the one you are courting is resentful of your abilities and talents, jealous of your skills or achievements, uptight about your weaknesses or lack of ability in an area. TAKE NOTE.

## To Develop an Ability to Survive Arguments

Can your relationship survive misunderstandings, arguments, and the occasional conflict of interest? In the Song of Solomon 2:15, we find a mutual commitment of the couple to face and resolve difficulties: *“Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.”* Foxes are deadly to vineyards because they nibble the early blossoms from the vines thus preventing fruit from maturing. A number of things have the capacity to nip a relationship in the bud before it has time to develop fully. Little foxes might include communication glitches, unthoughtful acts, little resentments and disagreements, colliding differences of opinion, or unchecked premarital passion.

You need to learn to fight clean and to resolve conflicts fairly and in love. Courtship is the time for developing those skills.

## To Gracefully Part ways if determination that marriage is not in the future

If at any time in your courtship you realize that you are not going to marry, then end your courtship as graciously and kindly as you can. Be careful of wounding each other's heart. Let the person know that you value the time you have spent together and that you want only the best for the person in the future. Hurts will be minimized if you push for communication over commitment at this stage of the relationship.