

2026-05-07: Courting Q&A

“ Should family issues be considered red flags in a relationship? For example, if a guy has a lot of conflict or drama with his family, could that affect his relationship with the girl he’s interested in? Is that something she should be concerned about?

- No one chooses their family background - we live in a broken world and no family is perfect.
- There’s a difference between:
 - someone who comes from a difficult family but is humble, self-aware, peaceful, and trying to grow
 - someone who constantly lives in chaos, fuels conflict, refuses accountability, or brings that dysfunction into every relationship
- At the same time, someone may come from a very healthy-looking family externally and still struggle deeply personally.
- Warning signs or red flags:
 - Speaks about family with constant bitterness, dishonor, or hatred.
 - Patterns of uncontrolled anger, manipulation, dishonesty, or disrespect.
 - Unable to set healthy boundaries.
 - Family drama dominates their emotional life and spills into the relationship.
 - If they expect the future spouse to “rescue” them emotionally from unresolved wounds.
- So the issue is not simply “Does he have family problems?” but:
 - Is he emotionally and spiritually mature?
 - Does he take responsibility for himself?
 - Is he pursuing healing and growth?
 - Does he know how to maintain peace while still honoring family?
- A healthy relationship usually needs: honesty, boundaries, emotional stability, humility, and the ability to handle conflict in a godly way.

“ When one goes to court another person, is there a specific age difference between each person (same age, 1 year, 2 year difference, etc.) that is best or is this dependent on each couple? Is this a big deal when you are considering courting someone?

- In general, it is advised that the man is older and that the age gap is not too large
- Woman is a few years older than the man - generally not an issue

- If there are no other issues involved, it is typically okay
- If she is five years older, it typically requires permission from the bishop; even then, it is usually granted but the purpose is to make both people aware of the challenges that may be faced because of age.
- Challenges:
 - Jealousy
 - Insecurity about aging, attractiveness, attention from others, differences in life experience
 - Inverted Roles
 - he's marrying his mom... she's gonna clean up after him and cook for him and take care of him
 - Inverted Submission
 - Maturity Level
 - Readiness to settle down... a young man may be in the "I want to travel" stage and a woman may be in the "I need to have kids ASAP" stage
 - He's in the "let's order takeout" stage and she's in the "let's have a home cooked meal at the dinner table"
 - Physical Activity
- Imagine a woman with a strong personality who is more "financially successful" than her husband and who is also older than him... it makes it very difficult on that man and he may feel emasculated at every turn. Especially if she has a strong personality and he has a more quiet personality
- Man significantly older than woman
 - Power imbalance, financial imbalance
 - Parent-child dynamic... I married my dad
 - Different life stages
 - Differences in energy or lifestyle
 - Jealousy or insecurity
 - Long-term realities...
 - Aging, caregiving, raising children, timing of retirement, health
 - What are the motives?
 - She may be looking at financial comfort
 - He may be looking at admiration

“ If a girl is not really interested in a boy but she thought of maybe giving him a chance and she started courting him... or vice-versa, is that considered ghosting?

- That is not ghosting
- Ghosting is when you are talking to someone and then all of a sudden, you stop responding, answering, etc. this is disrespectful (especially if unprompted)
- The person you are talking to is A PERSON
- It's okay to give someone a chance and to see if there is compatibility, to get to know him, etc. It is NOT okay to ghost someone without giving them notice...

If all sins are the same, me thinking a lustful thought is considered committing a sin so how does that differ from doing physical actions with someone (not sex)

- "All sins are the same" is NOT accurate
- All sins separate us from God
- But sin differs in
 - Impact on others
 - Level of intention
 - Habit
 - Public vs. Private
 - Consequences
 - Scandal, Reputation
- A lustful thought is a sin in the dark box of your mind and heart - it is like a small seed planted. It is good to uproot it in the sacrament of confession before it grows.
 - It impacts me, but it has not yet impacted someone else
 - It may be unwanted temptation - no intention behind it
 - It is private
 - There is no material-world consequence (e.g. getting arrested or jailtime)
 - There is no risk of scandal or damaging reputation
- Physical expressions of lust are:
 - Impact me and the other person
 - No longer an "unwanted temptation" - but an action I am taking against my purity
 - Become habitual and addicting and difficult to refrain - also continues to be "not enough" and escalates
 - Has consequences in the material world
- There's also a difference between:
 - STRUGGLE
 - Giving In (deliberately feeding the sinful thought with fantasy, physical affection, escalating behavior)

“ What are the most important qualities to look for in a future spouse?
What are some good qualities we should look for in men/ women we want to eventually marry?

- Honesty, boundaries, emotional stability, humility, and the ability to handle conflict in a godly way
- Close with his Church, Service, Father of Confession
- Desire to serve others

“ What are early red flags people tend to ignore but shouldn't?

What is your opinion on long distance courting?

How do we know for real that this person is serious in her/his relationship with me?

- Long distance can work but needs more discernment
- Also needs more in-person time before marriage
- Risks: Texting relationship
 - Text messages do not convey emotion
 - A 30min text message convo is a 3 minute in-person convo... don't measure texting as "time we spent together"
- Red Flags:
 - Avoids meeting in person without a clear reason
 - Inconsistency
 - Secrecy or compartmentalized life
 - Strong words - weak actions
 - Especially in the age of AI

“ When should one start praying about this? How do you know that marriage is the calling God is giving you and not something else?

- From now
- This is a more general question about knowing the will of God in my life...
 - There is the general will of God which is my salvation
 - There is the personal will of God in my life - which job or which college, which spouse or monasticism, etc.

“ How to know if the person likes you

- Consistency in effort
- Make time for you (even with a busy schedule)
- Engage you personally, not just generically (e.g. small talk)
- They pay attention (e.g. to details - what you said before, what matters to you)
- Body language (eye-contact)
- They try to move things forward
 - From casual to more intentional
 - From vague to clear intentions
- they include you in their world (gradually)
 - Talking to their FoC about you
 - Mentioning you to their parents or their close friends (at the right time)

- Sharing certain parts of their life with you
- BUT:
 - Don't overread the signals... don't look at any small kindness as "interest" - it may be basic human decency
 - Don't ignore patterns (e.g. inconsistency)
 - Don't expect ALL of them all at once
 - Someone may not be good at eye-contact
 - Someone may have a bad memory
 - Someone may not know HOW to move things forward even if he wants to...

“ How long should one get to know another person before marriage?

- The purpose of courting and engagement
 - Nowadays people think the purpose of engagement is to plan a wedding together... it's true that planning a wedding together is the first "big thing" you have to work on together, manage some family dynamics together, handle some finances together, make some hard decisions, etc.
 - Not to prepare for a wedding - to prepare for a marriage
- Interdependence
 - Not dependence
 - Not independence
 - Interdependence - being able to function and interact and be successful TOGETHER - appreciating each other's contribution and recognizing your own self-worth
- Need ample time to discern (honestly) someone's character, consistency, family dynamics, conflict resolution, spiritual life, emotional maturity
- Need time to discern compatibility
 - In decision making
 - In school of thought (e.g. politics)
- You need enough time to experience each other
 - Stressed
 - Dealing with disappointment
 - Dependableness
- Be Sober
 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)
 - Sometimes attraction is MASKING incompatibility. I am attracted to her, so I see everything about her is perfect. Or if I see something lacking, "it's not a big deal" or "I can overcome it."

“ How can I prepare to be a good wife even before I meet someone?

- Keep your purity

- Grow yourself
 - Spiritual growth (Triangle)
 - Skill growth (e.g. cooking, cleaning, sewing, etc. - especially from your mom)
 - Intellectual growth
 - Physical growth (stay in shape, keep healthy)

“ How do you know if it's appropriate to start a court?

At what age should one start to court a potential spouse?

- Confer with your Father of Confession
- Everyone age is different
 - Based on maturity (financial, intellectual, career, emotional, spiritual)
 - Based on career (e.g. engineering vs. medical school + residency + fellowship)

“ What role do finances play in relationships?

- Money is a stewardship and a tool
- Money typically exasperates certain interior qualities
 - Someone who is generous, when he has a lot of money will be more generous; Someone who is stingy, when he has a lot of money, will still be stingy... maybe even more stingy
 - Money can show you if someone is disciplined or very impulsive
 - Money can reveal if someone is honest, or more hiding/deceiving
 - Money can reveal if someone is responsible or not
- In the same way, money can exasperate relationship dynamics
- It's important to be on the same page regarding:
 - Saving vs. Spending
 - How to make big financial decisions
 - Debt - acquiring debt, paying off debt, debt coming into the relationship
 - Financial planning, retirement, etc.
 - There is a RIGHT WAY to handle finances and there are WRONG WAYS
- Shared Expectations matter more than income
 - Are the lifestyles aligned...
 - Someone may be very well-off, driving the nicest car, very expensive accessories, keeping certain comforts
 - Someone else may be very well-off but he prefers no-name brands, simplicity, driving a car to the ground, etc.
 - Someone may have no money... but likes the appearance of being well-off
 - Someone may be used to a certain lifestyle with their parents who have accumulated a comfortable life over many years and decades... getting married may mean a drop in income and a drop in lifestyle

- Part of "getting ready for marriage" is financial readiness

“ What advice can you give about dealing with a heartbreak?

How to deal with rejection?

- Don't call it rejection
 - Rejection means "I was rejected" or "I am rejected"
 - In reality, it is the relationship that was rejected and that may have NOTHING to do with you
 - Say "it wasn't mutual"
 - "We weren't a match"
 - "It didn't work out"
 - "We aren't moving forward."
- Rejection says nothing about your worth or your value
 - Rejection might be about timing
 - Rejection might be about compatibility
 - You will reject someone too
 - It doesn't mean you are unworthy of a relationship or of love or of marriage
- Let it be Disappointing without over-interpreting
 - I take rejection to a conclusion and fill the gap with narratives...
 - "Something is wrong with me"
 - "I'll never find someone"
 - None of that happened
- Don't chase closure
 - This is not a job interview... "What am I lacking? How can I improve?" - questions like that are best left for your Father of Confession
- It's important that I don't play out huge fantasies and scenarios in my mind...
 - Someone might approach someone having already in their mind a huge romantic story
 - "I'm gonna say this cute joke" - "she's gonna laugh" - "I'm gonna ask her out for coffee" - "it's going to be wonderful" - "I reckon we can be engaged within six months" - "It would be perfect timing to attend the pre-marital retreat in January together" - "We could be married by February" - "I'll start looking for houses in Celebration" - sir, this is a Wendy's
 - When I have a fantasy in mind, and a huge scenario and marriage and children all played out... the rejection doesn't feel like a small "I'm not interested" but it feels like my marriage has been destroyed!
 - I am setting myself up for failure
- Don't overcorrect
 - "I'm not good enough" - self-rejection

- "I don't care about anyone" - hardness of heart (esp. after heartbreak)
 - Reflect, without obsessing
 - "Where can I grow" - not "How do I become perfect so this NEVER happens again?"
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