**Song of Songs 2:4 - 17**

**Bride (in soliloquy)**

 **4**     He has brought me to the banquet hall,

 and his banner over me is love

**(to King)**

  **5**    Sustain me with raisin cakes and refresh me with apples

 for I am faint with love.

**(in soliloquy)**

 **6** Oh that his left hand were under my head and his right hand

 embraced me**.**

**To Daughters of Jerusalem**

  **7**   I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,

 by the gazelles or the hinds of the field

 not to arouse, not to awaken love until it pleases.

**Bride (in soliloquy)**

 **8**   Sound of my beloved,

 Behold, he is coming,

 leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.

 **9**My beloved is like gazelle or a young stag.

 Look, he is standing behind our wall,

 gazing through the windows,

 peering through the lattice.

 **10**My beloved responded and said to me,

 “Arise my darling, my fair one, and come.

 **11** For behold, the winter has passed**.**

The rain is over and gone.

 **12** The blossoms have appeared in the land.

 The time of singing has come,

 And the cooing of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

 **13** The fig tree forms its figs,

 and the vines in blossom give forth fragrance.

 Arise, my darling, and my beautiful one, and come along.

 **14** O my dove, in the clefts of the rocks,

 in the hidden places of the steep pathway,

 Let me see your form; let me hear your voice.

 For your voice is sweet, and your form is lovely.

**King to Bride**

 **15**  Let us catch the foxes-the little foxes who ruin vineyards,

 for our vineyards are in blossom.

**Bride(in soliloquy)**

 **16**  My beloved is mine and I am his-he who pastures his flock

 among the lilies.

 **17**  Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,

 turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a

 young stag on the mountains of separation.

**The Closing Up the Dating Period.**

 As two people in dating, the longer you date a person, the more you should feel “we” identity to it. You should start feeling as you are a team of two, walking in the same direction, of like mind and heart before your God, eager to work together and to pull together at tasks that may become mutually yours. If you do not have a sense of growing together, then you must face up to the cold fact that you are most likely growing apart.

 Don’t fear putting a sudden end to a dating relationship that seems to be going nowhere. Those who force a relationship to endure are likely to be in a relationship that forever requires greater effort and affords little to no mutual satisfaction in the long run even after the marriage.

 When the longer you date a person, all the more you have a continued respect, enjoyment, and greater feelings of endearment, yet have no embarrassment or fear about the person, then you will eventually come to the point where both of you begin to court each other. The term, “courtship” sounds an old-fashioned, yet since all of you are in the heavenly royal court as members of the Heavenly Royal Family, you deserve such a noble and definite time of “we-ness” together towards a possible engagement time for the ultimate wedding in the end.

**What Is Courtship Anyway?**

 Courtship is the time when you begin to date the person whom you have been dating exclusively, more frequently, and with the goal of determining if this is the right person with whom you truly want to spend the rest of your life in marriage. Thus, your courtship can begin with a decisive decision to date only one person and end in a formal engagement or a definitive breakup of the relationship. No Christian singles in courtship period want to end their relationship badly leaving bitter, angry, frustrated, disappointed, discouraged, even depressed feelings behind the breakup. We need to do right this serious relationship, that is, “Courtship”!

**A Few Ingredients for a Successful Courtship**

1.    Physical, Mental and Spiritual Involvement Time

      Dating time has its share of certain objective observations, but courtship is more or less of involving towards a certain direction. By the time you enter the courtship, both of you have established enough trust between you during dating period. Thus, your courtship is the time for sharing one’s deeper desires, hopes, plans, even vulnerability without much fear of rejection. Yet the purity of their sex drive not physically involved is a must for the successful Christian courtship.

 In 2:4, the Shulamite woman clearly states that she is being loved by Solomon publicly. Solomon’s love for her is evident to all attend his banquet like banner over her. He is not ashamed of his love for her. Rather he is glad for all to see it. No wonder she grew more and more secure in his love. In 2:5, she even becomes lovesick, weak from her growing devotion to Solomon, and asking him to refresh her with his love. Her longing for his love is explicitly spoken to Solomon, and then she wants secretly Solomon to embrace her (2:6).

2.    Consistency over Time

      The courtship period is for a person to meet the possible mate exclusively. It means during your courtship, both of you will get more involved in more intimate ways. Therefore, during your dating period, if your relationships are notorious for many ups and downs, such a rocky dating experience could guarantee a more difficult courtship ahead. So during this courtship the more time passes by, the easier your communications with one another should be in every conceivable way. Without such consistency under all kinds of circumstances, you’d better stop going further and end your courtship completely to part ways.

3.    Unconditional Love

     The mutual respect and courtesy never cease during your dating time, rather they ought to grow deeper naturally without any unnatural force, so the foundation of their courtship is firmly placed upon the unconditional love for each other. Upon such unconditional love, they can develop to show consideration and forgiveness in various situations. Willingness to forgive and to ask forgiveness is two sides of one love-coin. Such unconditional love makes whatever past you had insignificant and easily overlooked without any resentments or feelings of shame.

 4. Deeper and Honest Communications

 The freer expression of Solomon’s love for her is described in terms of his excitement in anticipation of meeting her soon. (2:8-14) It’s a perfect season for such a courtship. The spring has arrived figuratively and actually. Solomon’s unconditional love for the Shulamite woman brings new life in him and her. For Solomon everything is fresh new and he has a new perspective because he truly falls in love with the Shulamite woman. So indeed, the spring is for lovers. Solomon’s love for her produces a genuine concern for his lover, and vice versa. His desire to communicate with her, to be honest with his feelings for her, and to discover all about her makes him eager to seek for his love its own time and place.

 5. Eventual yet Firm Commitment

 Finally, Solomon says very important ingredient during his courtship with the Shulamite woman in v.15. In that verse it says, “the little foxes that ruin vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.” What Solomon is saying is to get rid of anything to interfere with our blossoming courtship. All we have some form of baggage in the past. But they should be dealt with by their deeper level of honest communications. The couple must not cover up those baggage under pretense as if nothing has happened to them in the past. Rather speak up courageously and wisely with each other and leave them behind once for all.

 In her response, the Shulamite woman claims, “My beloved is mine and I am his.” (2:16) Here she sees Solomon’s great effort to make their courtship get going forward by removing any hindrances between them. And she is expressing her safety in the love of Solomon for her and her strong longing for a physical closeness with her lover, Solomon. (2:17) It is a true mark of commitment to each other in this specific courtship. So courtship is a time for a decisive commitment to each other. By that point their courtship brought them to the point of knowing that they were fully meant for each other and their mutual desire was to be husband and wife.

**Questions to Ponder with Prayers**

1.    What are the important ingredients for your Christian courtship?

  2.    How will you handle the growing sexual passion toward your lover during your courtship days?