

Steps to the Altar (No. 3)

By Rev. G. F. Failing

WHOM SHOULD YOU DATE?

That woman certainly was rash who said, "Any man will do." a woman should be quite as much interested in manhood and manliness as in a man.

It is obnoxious to think of a person dating an individual to spite another person. Yet this is sometimes done. Sometimes the person dated is really repugnant. These revengeful dates are out of harmony with the whole purpose of dating.

Obviously, dating ought to be a pleasant experience. Therefore, a person should date one who has some similar interests, with cultural backgrounds that do not clash, with esthetic appreciations that coincide. A person who is a lover of outdoor life and sports could hardly feel too companionable with one that had no relish for them. One who is absorbed with music interests would hardly find much continuing pleasure in company with a person who found recitals and music performances dull and tedious.

Of course, a person can pretend to be interested in another person's activity. A little observation—and perhaps another date—will reveal whether the interest is real and spontaneous or merely accommodating and temporarily acquired.

Dating also ought to be a profitable experience. One ought to covet the companionship of those of the highest mental and moral calibre. One young man, coming to the close of his Freshman year, thought he ought to ask some young lady to accompany him to the last social gathering of the class year. He told me that he tried to find in the class the girl with the noblest character and the highest ideals. He asked the girl for a date. They kept on dating—and they still are as husband and wife.

It is a mistake to consider that a date with a person of low ideals will have no adverse effect on the person with wholesome aspirations. The proverb states truly: "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." And again, "Make no friendship with an angry man...lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul" (Prov. 27: 17; 22: 24, 25). It is also vain to hope that dating will permanently improve another's character. Dating is not designed to be a "converting" experience.

Very frankly, if a person finds his ideals slipping or his life becoming more careless because of the influence of a friend, he ought to discontinue the friendship. Even if he "loves" that friend? Yes, even if there has arisen an affectionate tie. For, strangely enough, a person is capable of becoming emotionally attached to a person who has low ideals—and is of a questionable character.

There is also such a thing as "questionable" dating. Perhaps we ought to say simply that dating conduct is often very wrong. You see, personality is a gift from God; it is a sacred thing. The person who quickly establishes physical contact with a fellow or girl is often out only for his own selfish advantage. Promiscuous dating—that dating which insists on necking, petting and kissing—makes shabby and cheap those endearments that should be reserved only for the person of God's choice. Such indiscriminate "contact" can not be healthy for one's spiritual life or for one's self respect. It is time for courageous young people to get their standards of courting conduct from God and respected Christian people. Perhaps a girl might wish to dismiss for good a young man who insists on a good night kiss on the first or second date. A friend of youth has observed, "Kisses aren't

receipts for hamburgers!" Make sure that a person likes you for what you are—in character. Then you will be safe.

Finally, a Christian young person should date only approved people, those approved by the Lord. Paul wrote that a Christian widow was "at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39). The same rule doubtless applies to friendly dating. The words of II Corinthians 6: 14, 15 are not too strong for the Christian who wants to be supremely devoted to Jesus.

Someone objects, "I'll never get a man, then." That may be true in one case out of a hundred. But the devil surely often exaggerates when he tells young people that there are not enough real Christians to go around, and that some one will have to be content to keep friends with non-Christians. Old Satan is always threatening us with "little." In the garden God gave to Adam and Eve the fruit of all the trees when Satan approached Eve, he suggested that in drawing this one restriction, God had cut them off from enjoying the best fruit in Eden!

Find a Christian first. Then ask for a date. This is God's order. The young person who honors God—and looks around—will surely find someone of the opposite sex who will prove a delightful and worthy companion for a date.

Nowadays we hear a lot about "going steady." By "going steady" young people mean a promise of giving exclusive attention to one person only. It is not engagement to marry, but it gives a young person the privilege of saying, "He is mine," or "She is mine." Often there is an exchanged token of the promise. The purpose of "going steady" seems to lie in the advantage of belonging—a belonging that often results in wrong indulgence and sometime in shame. A fellow and a girl who truly admire each other and are thrilled to be together scarcely need such pledges as those involved in "going steady." They can keep on going together steady until they are engaged!

PAY THE PREACHER

"The most expensive thing churches do is underpay their ministers", Bishop Gerald Kennedy, of Los Angeles, told the 12th annual meeting of the Methodist Ministers Federal Credit Union.

Some churches look on a low salary as an economy, and while it might seem that they are getting a bargain if they pay a man 10 per cent less than he is worth, over the long run he probably will be 50 per cent less effective.

"But give a man 10 per cent more money than he is worth and he will likely produce 50 per cent more work," Bishop Kennedy said.

On the general topic of money and finance, Bishop Kennedy declared that "the way we spend has a tremendous bearing on our lives.

"This much is certain. Nothing is free. There is no short cut, or free way to get what you want.

"What we need to determine is what a thing is worth, and how much we ought to pay. When we borrow we ought to borrow for something worth having, we ought not to pay more than it is worth."

KEEP YOUR BRAINS BUSY

The repair bill for vacant houses is much larger than for those which are occupied. Every musician knows that the piano which stands idle gets out of order more rapidly than the one which is in daily use. Busy brains last longer than idle ones. Nothing is less conducive to mental health than the habit of listless thinking, which is equivalent to no thinking at all. —Selected