

Testimonials by our married Children

Thoughts on our courtship: by Brian 7-29-08

This is a big topic, and worthy of much reflection and discussion, but for the sake of time, I will attempt to highlight some of the positives and negatives of my experiences of courting Mandy. This is not an all-encompassing list, but rather some high level thoughts that come to mind.

Courtship gave me a lot of time to get to know the family. We had some very good trips, meals and times spent doing chores around the house together. I think this is a time where some good memories and relationships can be forged. I think that as the courtship progresses, there could be some more intentional experiences planned with the family for the purpose of spending time together building relationships. This would include some more trips to the park or beach or more canoe trips! (We almost lost Mandy on that one!) I also think it would nice to spend some more time out with Mandy and both her Mom and Dad. I plan to include this type of activity in my daughter's lives.

Courtship also gave me time to get to know Mandy's dad. We spent many hours over coffee and breakfast at local restaurants. This was valuable from several points of view. As a prospective husband, I was able to learn about how Mandy was raised and what she was taught to value. I was also able to hear of her strengths and struggles from someone who has watched her grow her whole life. I was challenged and encouraged in my personal and spiritual life. From Mandy's dad's viewpoint, this was a chance to see whether or not the guy (me) had honorable intentions. It was a chance to "interview" the guy, question and challenge them. This also gave an avenue of accountability for the guy with the father. (very good motivator!) These were also very valuable times. We covered a lot of good ground together. I believe would have benefited from some time spent in specific study of various topics relating to being a husband and a provider for a family. Looking back, I think that working through Dave Ramsey would have been very beneficial. We discussed finances, but I think I would have benefited from more in depth teaching on this topic. From debt to retirement savings, this would have been good to learn at a young age. Other topics could include theology, scripture interpretation, parenting, buying a home, etc... I also think that it would have been nice to have Mandy be involved in some of these meetings. I plan to include this type of activity in my daughter's lives as well.

Our courtship did not give us a lot of time to get to know each other in a low stress relationship. We did not have much time to see each other without the pressure of being prospective marriage partners. I think this was in part to the fact that Mandy was young, but I would have benefited from spending more time with Mandy in less "pressure filled" settings. Perhaps time out with some friends, time out with other members of the family at group functions, etc... I think a chance to see each other without so much pressure would be good. There was a lot of pressure in our relationship to make sure that we were the "right one" for each other. Perhaps some of this was self-imposed, but I think the context of our courtship helped to underscore a sense of doubt and encouraged us to "second-guess" ourselves.

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The line of “physical activity” is a very hard one as well. Mandy and I are very glad that we have a history of not being sexually active with each other or anyone else before marriage. We are very thankful that we were both virgins when we were married. That fact has removed many issues that a majority of couples are forced to work through in their relationship. We do not have those issues. I do wonder though if there are acceptable forms of affection that we would have benefited from expressing and experiencing. When you feel guilty for expressing any affection, you develop a sense that affection is unhealthy and you can get emotionally constipated perhaps. I wonder if holding hands for example could have been an acceptable form of affection that would have benefited our relationship.

Overall, our courtship was a good one. We had many hard times, and many good times. We learned and grew through our time courting, and I plan to implement many of these concepts and strategies with my own children. I think in the end, Mandy and I have a great relationship, and are blessed to have each other, and to have very good relationships with our extended families.

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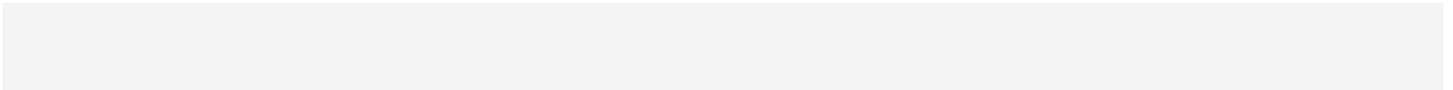
Thoughts of Jodi: 7-22-08

My name is Jodi Bond, and I have been happily married for four years. My marriage is the outcome of a successful courtship story, and when asked if my husband and I will be using the same process on our own children, our answers are both emphatically 'yes'.

Although certainly not the easiest road, courtship (which I loosely define as entering into a relationship only when the goal is marriage, and being guided and counseled closely by one's authorities) has built for us an intensely strong relational and spiritual foundation in our marriage which is not easily swayed by the attacks of this world.

I don't believe there is a set guideline to offer every couple when considering courtship, only to fully surrender one's relationship to God, trusting and depending on Him to reveal the way in which they are to walk. In that surrender is where selfless love, honesty, faithfulness, and all other virtues are born.

I hope you consider doing the same with your children, however, always being guided yourself by the Holy Spirit, seeking the perfect way in which He would have your children be guided.



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Thoughts on courtship Kelly Barta 7-21-08

Define Courtship??

When I think of courtship, I think of parental involvement. I think of structure, sensibility, serious mindedness (if that's a word), protection, prudence...

I don't think courtship is a sure safe-guard against the troubles of this world that can assault marriage, but I think it can be a real help

Having the love, support, and involvement of parents in the pre-marriage process is a huge benefit to their kids. This requires relationship and trust to be in place before 'courtship' ever arises.

I think it's also important before 'courtship' arises, to have talked w/ your kids about love, marriage, how the opposite sex is different – and how to work w/ those differences, passion, temptation, boundaries, the consequence of sin... and help them to establish conviction, so they will safe-guard their own hearts when opportunity presents itself.

I think one of the myths of courtship is that it will keep your kids pure and secure a long, faithful, and happy marriage. Nothing can do that – except God. (Col. 3) We can't control outcomes with formulas and we can't control our kids because they are individuals. If your kids don't have pure hearts, no rules are going to make them make the right choices – forever ; eventually desire gives way to temptation, temptation sin, and sin destruction. So I think more important than courtship is a personal relationship and fear of God, and a heart that desires to please and honor Him.

I do think helping your kids to set guidelines and keeping them accountable, w/ their consent, is beneficial. Find out what is important to them (good relationships between their 'special friend' and the fam, purity in affection and name, school or job secured 1st, etc.) and set those before they meet "the one". If by chance, one or more of these prior prerequisites are in conflict, talk it over, I don't think everything needs to be completely rigid. God's plans aren't always ours. I believe it's important to be lovingly frank as parents — if a parent has a reservation about a prospective person, it's their responsibility to be completely honest w/ their kids about it.

Biggest Pro in my opinion:

Makes you realize, as the girl, that the guy really loves you to pursue you and wait for you if necessary

Biggest Con in my opinion:

The guy likely may have lasting negative results w/ the family (respectfully speaking), from interrogation and judgment. This does affect the wife and the marriage. Maybe there's a way to avoid this?

It would be great to mention on-going support after courtship too. I've heard it said there are some communities that actually require meeting w/ a mentor/counselor for 6 months – 1 year after marriage in order to obtain a marriage license, as it has resulted in drastically fewer divorces. I think it was in FL. That would be a tremendous help for new couples.