

LOUD CRY  
MAGAZINE

THE YOUNG MESSENGER



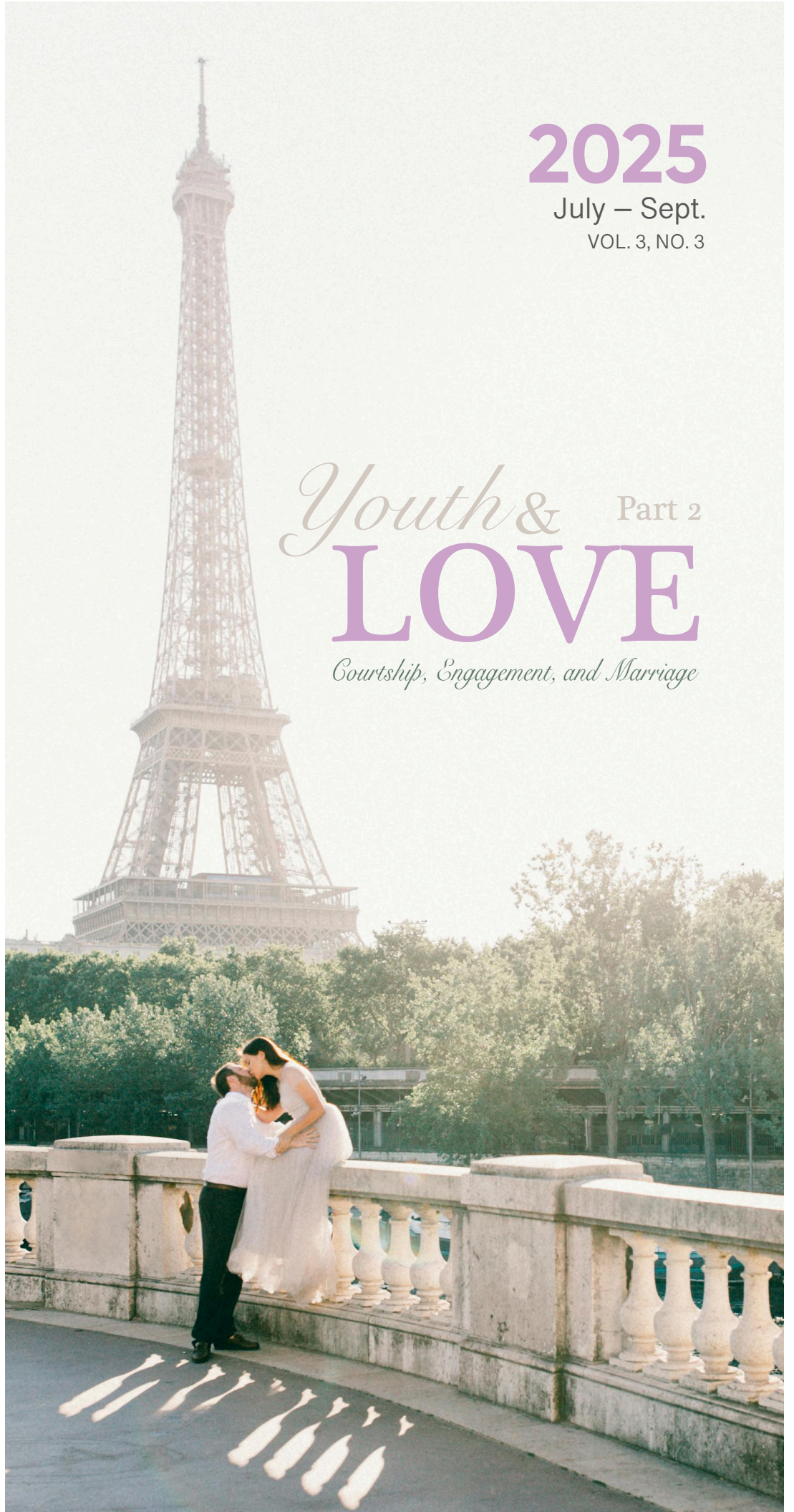
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*Youth &* Part 2  
**LOVE**

*Courtship, Engagement, and Marriage*





# THE YOUNG MESSENGER

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# *When Love is* **Blind**

By Ellen G. White

**T**wo persons become acquainted; they are infatuated with each other, and their whole attention is absorbed. Reason is blinded, and judgment is overthrown. They will not submit to any advice or control, but insist on having their own way, regardless of consequence.

Like some epidemic, or contagion, that must run its course, is the infatuation that possesses them; and there seems to be no such thing as putting a stop to it. Perhaps there are those around them who realize that, should the parties interested be united in marriage, it could only result in life-long unhappiness. But entreaties and exhortations are given in vain. Perhaps, by such a union, the usefulness of one whom God would bless in His service will be crippled and destroyed; but reasoning and persuasion are alike unheeded.

All that can be said by men and women of experience proves ineffectual; it is powerless to change the decision to which their desires have led them. They lose interest in everything that pertains to religion. They are wholly infatuated with each other,

and the duties of life are neglected, as if they were matters of little concern.

The good name of honor is sacrificed under the spell of this infatuation, and the marriage of such persons cannot be solemnized under the approval of God. They are married because passion moved them, and when the novelty of the affair is over, they will begin to realize what they have done. In six months after the vows are spoken, their sentiments toward each other have undergone a change. Each has learned in married life more of the character of the companion chosen. Each discovers imperfections that, during the blindness and folly of their former association, were not apparent. The promises at the altar do not bind them together. In consequence of hasty marriages, even among the professed people of God, there are separations, divorces, and great confusion in the church.

When it is too late, they find that they have made a mistake, and have imperiled their happiness in this life and the salvation of their souls. They would not admit that any one knew anything about the matter

but themselves, when if counsel had been received, they might have saved themselves years of anxiety and sorrow. But advice is only thrown away on those who are determined to have their own way. Passion carries such individuals over every barrier that reason and judgment can interpose.

Weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny. The step you are about to take is one of the most important in your life, and should not be taken hastily. While you may love, do not love blindly.

I hope you will have self-respect enough to shun this form of courtship. If you have an eye single to the glory of God, you will move with deliberate caution. You will not suffer lovesick sentimentalism to so blind your vision that you cannot discern the high claims that God has upon you as a Christian.

#### **From a Letter to a Young Man**

Salem, Oregon,  
June 8, 1880.

Dear John,

I am sorry that you have entangled yourself in any courtship with Elizabeth. In the first place, your anxiety upon this question is premature.

I speak to you as one who knows. Wait till you have some just knowledge of yourself and of the world, of the bearing and character of young women, before you let the subject of marriage possess your thoughts.

Elizabeth will never elevate you. She has not in her the hidden powers which, developed, would make a woman of judgment and ability to stand by your side, to help you in the battles of life. She lacks force of character. She has not depth of thought and compass of mind that will be a help to you. You see the surface and it is all there is. In a little while, should you marry, the charm would be broken. The novelty of the married life having ceased, you will see things in their real light, and find out you have made a sad mistake.

Love is a sentiment so sacred that but few know what it is. It is a term used, but not understood. The warm glow of impulse, the fascination of one

young person for another is not love; it does not deserve the name. True love has an intellectual basis, a deep thorough knowledge of the object loved.

Remember that impulsive love is perfectly blind. It will as soon be placed on unworthy objects as worthy. Command such love to stand still and cool. Give place to genuine thought and deep, earnest reflection. Is this object of your affection, in the scale of intelligence and moral excellence, in deportment and cultivated manners such that you will feel a pride in presenting her to your father's family, to acknowledge her in all society as the object of your choice?

Give yourself sufficient time for observation on every point, and then do not trust to your own judgment, and let the mother who loves you, and your father, and confidential friends, make critical observations of the one you feel inclined to favor. Trust not to your own judgment, and marry no one whom you feel will not be an honor to your father and mother, one who has intelligence and moral worth.

The girl who gives over her affections to a man, and invites his attention by her advances, hanging around where she will be noticed of him, unless he shall appear rude, is not the girl you want to associate with. Her conversation is cheap and frequently without depth.

It will be far better not to marry at all, than to be unfortunately married. But seek counsel of God in all these things, be so calm, so submissive to the will of God that you will not be in a fever of excitement and unqualified for His service by your attachments.

We have but little time to lay up a treasure of good works in heaven; do not make any mistake here. Serve God with your undivided affection. Be zealous, be whole-hearted. Let your example be of such a character that you will help others to take their stand for Jesus. Young men do not know what a power of influence they may have. Work for time and work for eternity.

Your adopted mother,



-Letter to Young Lovers, p. 33-37



# *Guidelines* for Physical Contact

By Morris Lowe



### Introduction:

**D**ear young people, brothers and sisters in Christ, like ancient Israel, we are at the very borders of the Promised Land. And Satan has laid the same snares for us, as he successfully laid his snares for the people of God who left Egypt and journeyed towards the Promised Land. The Servant of the Lord warns us that history will be repeated!

“Near the close of this earth’s history Satan will work with all his power in the same manner and with the same temptations wherewith he tempted ancient Israel just before their entering the Land of Promise. He will lay snares for those who claim to keep the commandments of God, and who are almost on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. He will use his powers to their utmost in order to entrap souls and to take God’s professed people upon their weakest points. Those who have not brought the lower passions into subjection to the higher powers of their being, those who have allowed their minds to flow in a channel of carnal indulgence of the baser passions, Satan is determined to destroy with his temptations—to pollute their souls with licentiousness.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 327

Dear youth, the history of ancient Israel illustrates that many of the people of God were overthrown by *perverted appetite* and the *sexual sins*. The Lord mercifully delivered them from Egyptian bondage, “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” 1 Corinthians 10:5–8

In this article I wish to address the fundamental weakness that was, and still is, the source of temptation and destruction of thousands of God’s people—the “lust of the flesh”—specifically, sexual temptations and sins. Like ancient Israel, modern Israel is in grave danger of falling victim to the same snares of Satan that overthrew the children of Israel as they journeyed to the Promised Land. The Scriptures tell us that twenty-three thousand (23,000) Israelites perished in one day because they committed **fornication** (1 Corinthians 10:8).

It was God, our Creator, who declared, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Genesis 2:18. It was the Lord who created the woman and presented her to the man in holy marriage. It is the Lord who declares that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. And it is our Creator who made us male and female and commanded the husband and his wife to be fruitful and multiply (have children).

God created us as social beings, and it is He who declares that it is not good for the man to remain sin-

gle. So, it is natural for a young person to start desiring companionship and eventual marriage as they grow older, and the powerful hormones Testosterone and Estrogen go into overdrive!

But teenage and young adulthood often prove to be a most dangerous time for young people when the temptations to satisfy sexual urges are powerful, unrelenting, and irrational. And, unfortunately, this is where many young people—including Christian youth—make serious mistakes that will injure their bodies, souls, and reputation. In their interactions and relationships with the opposite sex, young women and young men often “tempt Satan to tempt them” and end up disobeying the direct command of God to avoid sexual sins. Many young people deceive themselves that they are **STRONG** enough to flirt with temptations and fool themselves that they have enough “self-control” and moral strength to engage in inappropriate **Physical contact** with the object of their interest, such as hugging, kissing, and caressing their boyfriend/girlfriend, or fiancée, and not end up “crossing the line” of actual sexual intercourse.

My dear youth, this is like playing spiritual “Russian Roulette”! If you venture on a path forbidden by God and tempt the devil to tempt you, Satan **WILL** tempt you to commit sexual sins, and God will **NOT** intervene to prevent you from falling.

Before we address the issue of **physical contact and temptation**, it is important and wise to take heed to the commands and counsel of our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, concerning sexual sins. God clearly states that fornication and adultery are two worst kinds of sin that a person can commit! Fornication refers to sexual intercourse between two unmarried people and is often associated with premarital sex. Adultery refers to sexual intercourse between a married person and someone who is not their spouse and is often associated with infidelity or cheating in a marriage relationship.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith He, shall be one flesh. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” 1 Corinthians 6:15–16, 18



### Defiling God's Temple!

Sexual sins and immorality defile the temple of God.

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. . . . Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? **Be not deceived**: neither *fornicators*, nor idolaters, *nor adulterers*, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, 9–10

The Bible warns us that he who commits **sexual sins** destroyeth his/her own soul and brings re-



proach and dishonour upon themselves that shall not be wiped away even though God forgives:

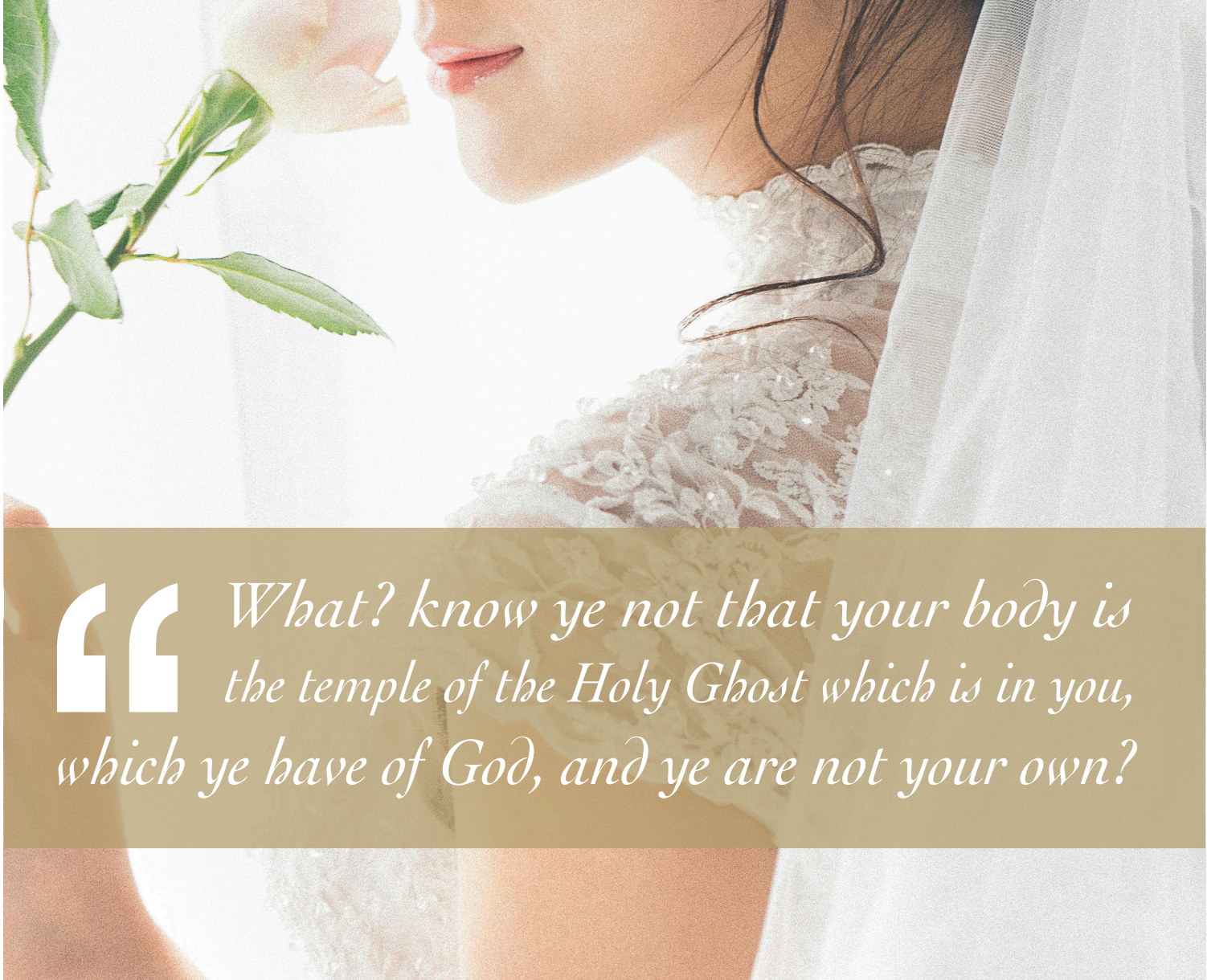
“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned? . . . But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.” Proverbs 6:27, 32–33

#### Satan Knows the Weak Points in Your Character

“Satan well knows the material with which he has to deal in the human heart. He knows—for he has studied with fiendish intensity for thousands of years—the points most easily assailed in every character; and through successive generations he has wrought to overthrow the strongest men, princes in Israel, by the same temptations that were so successful at Baal-peor. All along through the ages there are strewn wrecks of character that have been stranded upon the rocks of sensual indulgence.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 326

The human need and desire for companionship, and the desire to express one’s sexuality has caused many people to stumble and fall into the devil’s trap. The Bible records the sad histories of many of God’s people who were overthrown by the lust of the flesh and who committed fornication and adultery. Consider Reuben who committed fornication with his father Jacob’s concubine (Genesis 35:22); Judah and his daughter in law, Tamar (Genesis 38:13–18); David’s adultery with Bathsheba; King Solomon who had affairs with 1,000 women—700 wives and 300 concubines (“girl-friends”)! Who can forget the failures of Samson; or the 24,000 men of Israel who lost their lives and their souls because they committed **fornication** and **adultery** with Moabite women! (See Numbers 25:1-9). Do not forget the tragic mistake of Jacob’s (Israel’s) daughter **Dinah**.

“And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.” Genesis 34:1–2



“ *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* ”

My dear young people, you are living in a perverse and wicked world. The enemy knows that he has a short time to live, and soon Jesus Christ will return in power and great glory to justly punish unrepentant sinners, and to reward His faithful people with Eternal Life. These are the days of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah. Sexual immorality abounds: it is virtually everywhere—on social media, TV, on your smart phones, tablets, billboards and magazines. Sexual immorality has even invaded the schools, universities, and colleges. And, unfortunately, Satan seeks victims even in the Church. Sister White sounds an alarm against the prevalence of immorality in the world and even amongst professed Christians.

“A terrible picture of the condition of the world has been presented before me. Immorality abounds everywhere. Licentiousness is the special sin of

this age. . . . **The iniquity which abounds is not merely confined to the unbeliever and the scoffer. Would that this were the case, but it is not. Many men and women who profess the religion of Christ are guilty. Even some who profess to be looking for His appearing are no more prepared for that event than Satan himself. They are not cleansing themselves from all pollution.** They have so long served their lust that it is natural for their thoughts to be impure and their imaginations corrupt. . . Every Christian will have to learn to restrain his passions and be controlled by principle. Unless he does this, he is unworthy of the Christian name.” -*The Adventist Home*, p. 328

“Warnings and reproofs are before them in clear lines, yet they go over the same path that others have traveled before them. It is like an infatuating game at which they are playing. Satan leads them

on to ruin themselves, to imperil the cause of God, to crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 328

### Physical Contact and Temptation

Dear youth, you may find another young person attractive, and he/she is your friend. You may ask: “Can we hold hands?” Is it okay in the sight of God to hug, kiss, or cuddle your “girlfriend” or “boyfriend”, or fiancé ? To what extent is physical contact okay?

Can physical contact trigger sexual desires in the youth? The answer is YES!

According to credible scientific studies, physical contact can trigger sexual desires in some individuals. Here are some examples of how **physical contact** can trigger emotional and sexual arousal:

**Holding hands:** physical touch, like holding hands, can increase emotional connection and arousal.

**Hugging:** a warm, prolonged hug can release *oxytocin*, often called the “cuddle hormone,” which can stimulate feelings of attachment and intimacy. Close physical contact, such as cuddling, can release *dopamine*, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and desire.

**Direct skin-to-skin contact:** It can stimulate nerve endings, releasing powerful hormones like *adrenaline* and *oxytocin*, which can contribute to sexual arousal.

**Massage:** Sensual massage can stimulate blood flow, relax muscles, and release *endorphins*, creating a pleasurable and intimate experience which can escalate into forbidden sexual acts.

**Kissing:** Kissing can stimulate the brain's reward system, releasing *dopamine* and increasing sexual desire.

It is important to acknowledge that in some cultures, hugging, kissing, and other forms of close physical contact are the norm and may not be considered as “sinful” by society. But let us remember that as God’s people we are called to live, not by societal norms or standards, but by the teachings, principles, and commandments of Christ. Our culture must be the *Christian* culture!

### Habits and Activities to Avoid and Practice

What are some of the activities that young people should avoid, to escape the snares of Satan, and to keep themselves morally pure before God? The Scriptures admonish us to shun the very appearance of evil, and enter not into the path of temptation.

- Do not *date, court, or marry* unbelievers! (2 Corinthians 6:14–18)
- Be careful of flattery (the flattering tongue) (Proverbs 6:24)
- Do not be infatuated by physical/outward beauty (Proverbs 6:25)
- Staying up late alone together is dangerous! (Psalm 127:2)
- Do not tempt Satan to tempt you.
- Shun all appearances of evil. (1Thessalonians 5:22)
- Do not overestimate **your** moral strength to resist sexual temptations! (1 Corinthians 10:11–12)
- Ask Christ for help to resist temptations; (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- Be open and honest with your parents
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact
- If sinners entice you, do not consent! (Proverbs 1:10)
- Fear and respect God (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14)
- Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth! (Ecclesiastes 12:1; 11:9–10)
- Young ladies, keep yourselves pure: respect yourselves! Men/boys will take “advantage of you”—if you allow them to.
- Avoid immodest dressing.
- Avoid having friends who do not fear and respect God.

### God’s Counsel / Instructions to the Youth

“My son, keep My words, and lay up My commandments with thee. Keep My commandments, and live; and My law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.” Proverbs 7:1–5

“Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of My mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. **For she hath cast down many wounded:**

yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” Proverbs 7:24-27


“My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.” Proverbs 5:1-5

Dear youth, God has your interest at His heart. He loves you with all His heart and died to redeem you from sin and this perverse and wicked generation. Please listen to Him and obey Him, and wait patiently for His plans to be fulfilled in your life.

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word. With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” Psalm 119:9-11

Dear precious youth, “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.”

Amen.



In the journey of romantic relationships, recognizing warning signs early can save years of heartache and misdirection. Just as a skilled navigator watches for storm clouds on the horizon, a wise individual learns to identify relationship red flags before they develop into destructive patterns. This discernment is not about cynicism or fear—it is about wisdom and self-protection.

The foundation of healthy discernment comes from developing both spiritual insight and practical knowledge. As noted in *Messages to Young People*, “Great care should be taken by Christian youth in the formation of friendships and in the choice of companions. Take heed, lest what you now think to be pure gold turns out to be base metal” (p. 391). This timeless counsel reminds us that appearances can be deceiving, and careful evaluation is essential.

This guide will equip you with practical tools to identify concerning behaviours while helping you build a solid foundation for healthy relationships. By developing discernment in your twenties, you establish patterns that will serve you throughout life.

# *If you see these signs, Run!* **Warning Signs and Red Flags** *in Relationships*

By Elder Smith Hernandez

## Part. 1

### Recognizing Warning Signs

#### 1 The Character Foundation

Character forms the bedrock of any lasting relationship. When evaluating a potential partner, look beyond surface charm to consistent patterns of behaviour that reveal true character.

Historical examples show that character deficiencies eventually surface despite initial attraction. As Sister Ellen White observed, "If you have integrity of soul, you will not be swayed from the right. No motive will be sufficient to move you from the straight line of duty; you will be loyal and true to God." –*Messages to Young People*, p. 437. This principle applies equally to potential partners—if they lack integrity in small matters, larger issues will inevitably follow.

#### Red Flags in Character Development:

- Dishonesty in small matters
- Unwillingness to take responsibility for mistakes
- Treating service workers or family members poorly
- Inconsistency between words and actions
- Lack of self-control under stress

Sarah, a 22-year-old university student, noticed her boyfriend frequently told small lies to avoid inconvenience. "It seemed harmless at first," she recalled, "but when he started lying to me about where he was spending his evenings, I realized this was a pattern, not an exception."

#### 2 Spiritual and Value Alignment

Relationships thrive when partners share fundamental values and spiritual orientation. Misalignment in these areas often indicates future conflict that can undermine relationship stability.

"Marriage between believers and unbelievers is forbidden by God," states a clear principle in *Messages to Young People*, adding that "too often the unconverted heart follows its own desires, and marriages unsanctioned by God are formed" (p. 391). This counsel extends beyond religious labels to the deeper question of whether both individuals share compatible worldviews and life purposes.

#### Red Flags in Value Alignment:

- Mockery of your spiritual beliefs or practices
- Pressure to compromise on core values
- Discomfort when discussing spiritual matters
- Resistance to attending important religious events with you
- Significant disagreement on fundamental life goals



### 3 Communication Patterns

Healthy communication forms the life-line of successful relationships. Pay careful attention to how a potential partner expresses themselves, resolves conflict, and responds to your thoughts and feelings.

The wise counsel from *Messages to Young People* applies directly: “The habit of frequently being in the society of the one of your choice, and that, too, at the sacrifice of religious privileges and of your hours of prayer, is dangerous; you sustain a loss that you cannot afford” (p. 438). This highlights how communication patterns that undermine spiritual growth represent a significant warning sign.

#### Red Flags in Communication:

- Dismissal or belittling of your thoughts and feelings
- Frequent criticism or contempt
- Unwillingness to discuss uncomfortable topics
- Excessive defensiveness when receiving feedback
- Silent treatment or withdrawal as punishment

### 4 Control and Autonomy Issues

Control dynamics emerge early but often intensify over time. A healthy relationship balances togetherness with individual autonomy and respects personal boundaries.

“Let it become the ruling purpose of your heart to grow to a complete man in Christ Jesus,” advised Sister White to a young man. “This is not an objectionable feature in your character if all your powers are surrendered to God.” –*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 75. This principle reinforces that self-development remains essential even within a relationship—and any partner who inhibits your growth does not support your highest good.

#### Red Flags in Control Dynamics:

- Monitoring your whereabouts, communications, or friendships
- Making decisions that should be mutual without consulting you
- Isolating you from friends and family
- Using guilt or emotional manipulation to influence your choices
- Demanding access to your personal devices or accounts



## 5 Emotional Regulation and Conflict Resolution

How a person handles frustration, disappointment, and conflict reveals much about their emotional maturity. These patterns rarely improve without dedicated effort and often worsen under relationship stress.

“Character does not come by chance,” we read in *Messages to Young People*, “It is not determined by one outburst of temper, one step in the wrong direction. It is the repetition of the act that causes it to become habit and molds the character either for good or for evil” (p. 163). This insight reminds us to look for patterns rather than isolated incidents.

### Red Flags in Emotional Regulation:

- Explosive anger or rage episodes
- Inability to apologize sincerely
- Holding grudges or bringing up past mistakes repeatedly
- Rapid mood swings that leave you walking on eggshells
- Refusal to seek help for significant emotional struggles

## Assessment Quiz: Identifying Red Flags

Rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

1. My partner shows consistent respect for my boundaries, even when disappointed.
2. I feel comfortable expressing differing opinions without fear of punishment or rejection.
3. My partner takes responsibility for mistakes rather than blaming me or others.
4. Our relationship supports rather than hinders my spiritual growth.
5. My friends and family generally feel positive about our relationship.
6. My partner speaks respectfully about others, including exes.
7. I can be my authentic self without criticism or pressure to change.
8. We can disagree without it turning into a major conflict.
9. My partner shows consistent truthfulness in both small and large matters.
10. I feel emotionally safe when communicating difficult feelings.

**Your Total Score:**

### Scoring:

- 40-50: Your relationship shows strong, healthy patterns
- 30-39: Some concerning elements deserve attention
- Below 30: Multiple red flags present—seek wise counsel



## Part. 2

# Building a Solid Foundation

## 1 Developing Spiritual Discernment

Cultivating spiritual discernment provides an internal compass for wise decision-making in relationships. This involves developing both knowledge and spiritual sensitivity.

“For the mind and the soul, as well as for the body, it is God's law that strength is acquired by effort,” we read in *Education*, “It is exercise that develops” (p. 123). This principle applies directly to discernment—it grows through consistent practice and spiritual development.

### To strengthen your discernment:

- Establish a consistent prayer and meditation practice
- Study principles of healthy relationships from spiritual sources
- Seek counsel from spiritually mature mentors
- Pay attention to your internal peace (or lack thereof)
- Regularly evaluate your relationships against God's standards

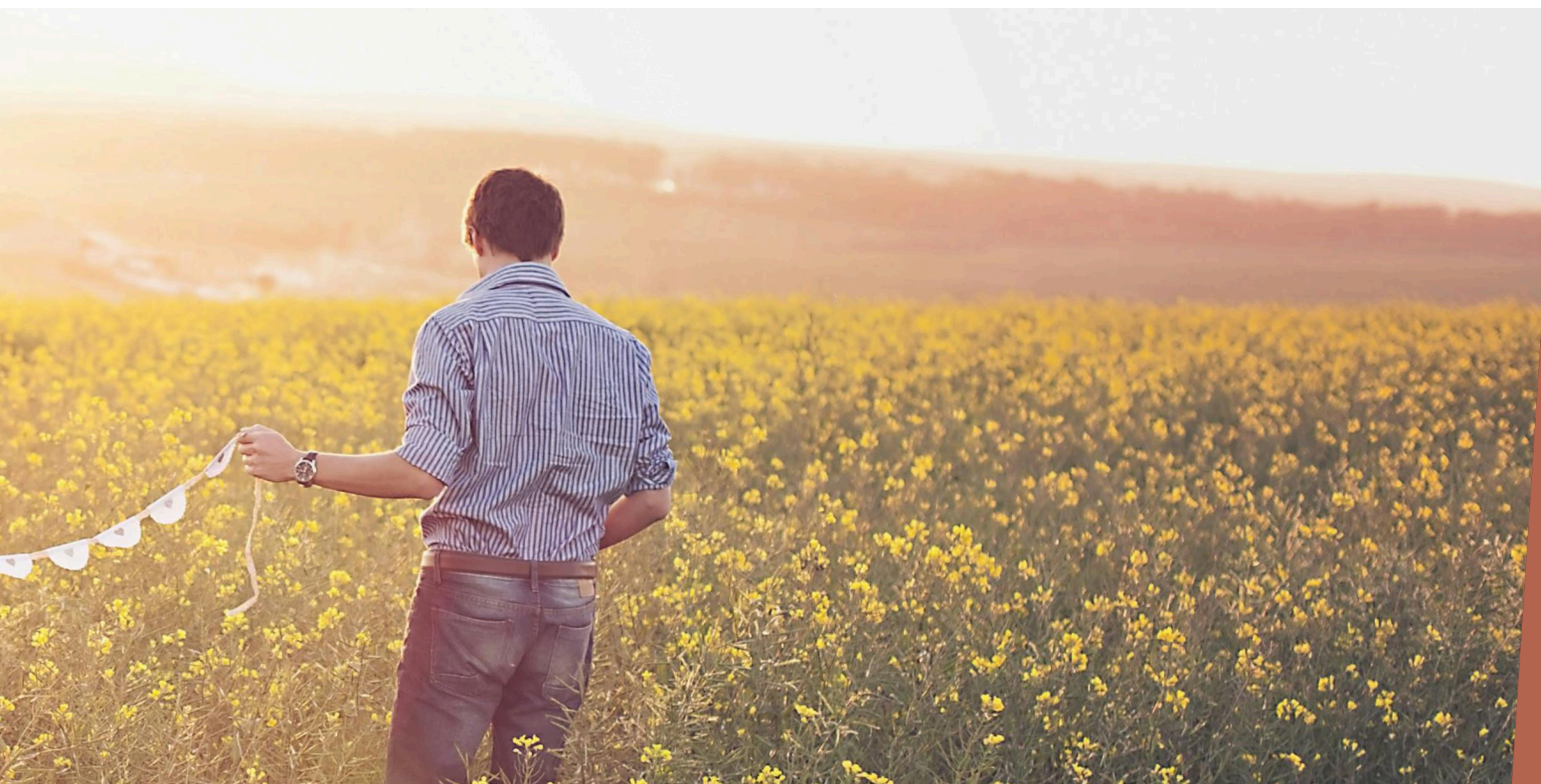
## 2 Setting Proper Boundaries

Boundaries protect what matters most and provide a framework for healthy interaction. Clear boundaries are essential for maintaining your well-being in any relationship.

“Firmness and integrity of purpose should be cultivated,” advised Ellen White, “These qualities are positively necessary to a successful Christian life.” –*Messages to Young People*, p. 437. This guidance applies directly to relationship boundaries—they require both clarity and the courage to maintain them.

### To establish healthy boundaries:

- Identify your non-negotiable values and communicate them clearly
- Practice saying “no” when necessary, without excessive guilt
- Recognize unhealthy guilt or pressure as boundary violations
- Maintain meaningful connections outside your romantic relationship
- Allow appropriate consequences when boundaries are repeatedly crossed



### 3 Cultivating Mutual Respect and Growth

Healthy relationships feature mutual respect and encourage individual growth alongside shared development. This balance creates lasting satisfaction and compatibility.

As noted in *Letters to Young Lovers*, “Let some of the hours of courtship before marriage run through the married life” (p. 13). This wisdom highlights that the respectful attention partners show during courtship should continue throughout the relationship—not disappear once commitment is secured.

#### To foster respect and growth:

- Express appreciation for your partner's positive qualities regularly
- Support each other's individual goals and interests
- Discuss differences with curiosity rather than judgment
- Celebrate growth and positive changes
- Address concerns directly but kindly

### 4 Building Communication Skills

Effective communication serves as both prevention and solution for most relationship challenges. These skills require intentional development and consistent practice.

“Not one word should be spoken, not one action performed, that you would not be willing the holy angels should look upon and register in the books above,” counselled Sister White regarding courtship communication. She added that affection should be “worthy of the followers of Jesus Christ, exalted in its nature, and more heavenly than earthly.” –*Letters to Young Lovers*, p. 13. This high standard encourages communication that builds up rather than tears down.

#### To improve communication:

- Practice active listening without interrupting
- Express feelings using “I” statements rather than accusations
- Address issues promptly rather than allowing resentment to build
- Verify understanding before responding
- Schedule regular check-ins about relationship satisfaction

# Assessment Quiz:

## Building Your Relationship Foundation

Rate your current relationship foundation from 1 (needs significant work) to 5 (strong foundation):

1. We have discussed and aligned on core values and life direction.
2. We maintain healthy individual identities alongside our couple identity.
3. We can discuss difficult topics without damaging the relationship.
4. Our spiritual practices and beliefs are compatible and mutually supportive.
5. We maintain healthy relationships with friends and family outside our partnership.
6. We intentionally build skills to improve our relationship.
7. We take responsibility for our own growth and healing.
8. We establish and respect boundaries with each other.
9. We handle conflict as "us versus the problem" rather than "me versus you."
10. We support each other's goals and dreams actively.

### Your Total Score:

### Scoring:

- 40-50: Strong foundation with healthy patterns
- 30-39: Good foundation with some areas for growth
- Below 30: Foundation needs significant strengthening



Recognizing warning signs in relationships is not about fear or mistrust—it is about wisdom self-care, and at the end, happiness. By developing discernment and building healthy relationship skills now, you lay the groundwork for a lifetime of meaningful connection.

Remember that healthy relationships should consistently bring out your best self and support your highest purpose. As Sister Ellen White wisely observed, "If men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray four times a day when such a step is anticipated." —*Messages to Young People*, p. 411. This counsel underscores the seriousness of relationship decisions and the importance of spiritual guidance in making them wisely.

Trust your discernment, honour your values, and remember that a relationship worth having will align with—not oppose—your deepest convictions and highest calling.

Amen.



# The Secret of a *Successful*

## Long Distance Relationship

By Ylenia Gallo

I can confidently say that the greatest accomplishment of my life was marrying my beloved husband, Makoto. Our courtship and engagement have been anything but easy—when we started, we were both so young, trying to hold onto each other across the distance between Italy and Japan. Seven years later, what seemed to be a painful trial, I realized it to be a blessing in disguise. Nothing else would have prepared us to be suitable companions for each other, and the Lord knew it. Four years of a long-distance relationship has taught me so much about patience, endurance, surrender and selflessness. I am convinced that without having endured this challenging experience together, my husband and I would not have the harmonious marriage we share today. The Lord has led our relationship in marvelous ways. He is the reason I can write this article today and share my testimony, hoping it will bless whoever receives it. Among the many meaningful lessons this incredible journey has brought to my husband and me, here are a few that stand out:

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

It might seem trivial, but communication is crucial for couples who are embarking in a long-distance relationship. I used to think that courtship was all about silences, long eye-contacts and sighs of love. So romantic, right? I soon realized it is rather foolish to think that a relationship can grow without any sort of dialogue with the person on the other side. Especially in the early stage of a relationship, it is important to get to know each other on a deeper level. Be curious, ask questions: talk about your friends, your school, your job—open your worlds to each other. Whether through letters, text messages, emails or calls, maintaining consistent communication is the key to staying connected. As long-distance lovers, talking will be the main activity circumstances will allow you to do together—and that is not necessarily a sad thing. You will have plenty of time to make meaningful, deep conversations and by the time you get to meet again, you will notice that you have grown to a deeper understanding of each other and your relationship will be ready for the next stage.

## KEEP AN OPEN MIND

My husband was born in Korea but moved to Japan at a young age, while I was born and raised in Italy and never left the country. Neither of us had been exposed to the other's culture before and trust me—that made things challenging. No matter how good communicators you think you are, sometimes cultural differences can create misunderstandings or disagreements that will make you feel like you are too different from each other. If this happens, always remember to keep an open mind. Of course, when it comes to principles of faith, we are never to compromise ourselves. But if it's something trivial that does not influence your faith or corrupt your standards, I encourage you to talk it out with your partner and try your best to find common ground. After all, cultural diversity can be a gift for your relationship: I benefit from my husband's oriental upbringings, by learning about eastern medicine and natural ways of healing. On the other hand, he is happy to feel the warmth and cheerfulness of my Italian family, whenever we go and visit.

## MAKE TIME FOR EACH OTHER

Long-distance relationships require a bigger effort compared to close-distance ones, in terms of finding the time for each other. Especially if the time gap between you and your partner is significant, your schedules might clash most of the time, making it challenging to spend some quality time together. What I found worked for my own relationship was setting a specific time during the week (Sundays) to have a video call. Sometimes, we would have to give up on plans with our friends and choose to prioritize time with each other, but it was worth the sacrifice. I would find myself looking forward to that special time when the two of us could enjoy each other's company to the maximum extent possible, without any worry about the world around us.

## HAVE A SET GOAL IN MIND

What kept us going during those four long years of distance was knowing when our next reunion would be. Due to tickets availability or a school break, we were only able to see each other once a year, for a couple of weeks. Waiting was tough, however, looking forward to seeing my beloved again would make it easier to bear. Often, I would set a countdown app on my phone, to track the days left until we meet again. I remember the thrill and excitement as the days flew by and the numbers on the screen would decrease: two digits! One digit! . . . The longer the waiting, the sweeter the reunion. Distance teaches you to never take time with your partner for granted: you must treasure every minute, every hour, every day together. Even now that I live in the same house as my husband and see him basically every day, it still feels like an undeserved blessing for which I am so grateful for.

## DON'T COMPLAIN

Something I regret doing during my courtship with my beloved husband, is complaining to him about the hardships of long distance. When spending



time disconnected from each other, I would often feel lonely and miserable. And instead of trying my best to appreciate my partner's efforts by showing a positive attitude, I would end up dragging him into the dark pit where I would pity myself. We were both downhearted and emotionally drained. Until I realized: the person on the other side is struggling the same way I am. Although he wouldn't show it with the same intensity as me. I had to remind myself that it was not my partner's fault if he lived far and was unable to be as close as I wished him to be. You and your partner are a team, and the hardship of distance is the "test" you need to face together. You are going to gather all the support and courage you can, to make your relationship flourish and endure the test of time and distance. And when it feels lonely and overwhelming, the word of God comes to our rescue: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18. Distance is only a temporary condition. If you do well and show perseverance, if you let your love be shaped by the difficulties of the present time, I promise, your reward will be great in your future life together. Believe me when I say it is not the end of the world.

#### BE CREATIVE

If you have been in a long-distance relationship for a long time, you might feel like you're "losing the spark". The excitement of the early stage may fade away and moments spent with your partner may feel dull and lack spontaneity. Don't let this happen to you. Find new creative ways to show your feelings to each other. Send handwritten letters, surprise each other with small gifts, create bucket lists of things you wish to do together or plan virtual dates. Me and my husband would often look for fun games to play online, as if we were in the same room. On other occasions, we would spend long hours doing a Bible study together, discussing a certain topic. At times, we would follow the same Bible plan and share our notes at the end of the day about what we read earlier. Those activities heavily contributed to making us feel closer to each other and somehow kept the excitement alive even after years. It's important that you show, even with small, thoughtful gestures, that you keep your partner in mind, and that you care for them.

## CONCLUSION

You might be thinking, “I don’t wish to be in a long-distance relationship. It requires too much work. It’s just not for me.” And it’s true: long-distance relationships can be more challenging for some than others. However, if your love for one another comes from above, I’m confident that it will endure the test of distance and time. Distance doesn’t weaken love—it refines it. It forces you to focus on loving your partner with your spirit, rather than just through physical presence. In doing so, your relationship grows deeper roots, and you become more able to make decisions with clarity and sound judgment. Please, pray for wisdom. Use the time apart as an opportunity to reflect on your love and discover whether the partner you’ve chosen is the one you want to spend your lifetime with. This period of distance offers a unique chance to get to know each other on a deeper level, with pure intentions and sincerity. Long-distance love is a form of love that mirrors the way God loves us. God’s love for us is unconditional, constant, and ever-present, even when we can’t feel Him or see Him. True love isn’t about physical proximity, but about the closeness of the heart. Just as God is always near, even when unseen, the love in a long-distance relationship can feel just as powerful and intimate. It is sustained by faith, hope, and trust in one another.

What a privilege it is to learn about God’s love through our own relationships and to practice it in our lives. I want to encourage you to experience a deeper connection, built not on fleeting moments but on the enduring bond of spirit. True love “endures all things.” 1 Corinthians 13:7

May God bless your relationship.  
Amen

# When is the

## The Science Behind the "Right Age"

**N**icholas Wolfinger, a sociologist at the University of Utah, studied data from the National Survey of Family Growth to identify the ideal age for marriage if one wants to avoid divorce.

His conclusion? The best time to marry is between ages 29 and 32—an idea dubbed the "Goldilocks Theory" of marriage: Not too early, not too late—just right.

Wolfinger’s research found:

- For every year before 32 you marry, your risk of divorce increases by 11%.
- For every year after 32, the risk increases by 5%.

Getting married too young or too late can be risky. The late 20s and early 30s strike the best balance of maturity, adaptability, and readiness.

# Right Time to Get Married?

By Errol Fletcher

Still, Wolfinger reminds us: Marriage is a commitment. No age guarantees success. It is never easy, but with intention and work, a strong marriage is possible at any age.

## What Does the Bible Say About Age for Marriage?

The Bible does not specify a particular age for marriage. Instead, it teaches principles of maturity, responsibility, and readiness.

In many cultures, child marriages were once common—but scripture makes clear that a person must be grown and mature, especially physically, before entering into marriage.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” Romans 13:1-2

We are commanded to obey our governments’ marriage laws. So while cultural traditions may

vary, God’s Word insists on physical and social maturity, and on submitting to governing laws that protect human dignity.

## God’s Original Model for Marriage: Adam and Eve

Let us look at God’s first marriage, between Adam and Eve.

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. . . . And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. . . . And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.” Genesis 1:27-28, 31; 2:8

Note: It was a man—not a boy.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. . . . And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to



fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. . . . And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living." Genesis 2:18, 21-24; 3:20

God created Adam and Eve as mature adults, spiritually sound, physically healthy, and ready to build a life together.

They had a home (the Garden of Eden), responsibilities (caring for it), and communion with God.

### Why Early Marriages Are Risky

The Bible does not offer an age limit, but through wisdom and example, it shows that maturity is critical.

Marriages based on immature passion, peer pressure, or impulsiveness often result in heartache. Youth rushing into marriage frequently lack:

- Ripe love
- Sound judgment
- Mental and emotional stability

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Philippians 2:3-4

This scripture teaches that marriage demands humility, selflessness, and readiness to prioritize your partner.

### The Problem of Wide Age Gaps

While Scripture doesn't forbid age gaps, wisdom and experience show that marriages with large age differences often face challenges, such as:

- Differences in health and vitality
- Difficulty relating emotionally
- Children receiving less care and guidance due to an aging parent

Some studies have shown that:

- Older men marrying young women may live longer, but their wives may die younger due to caretaking burdens.
- Young men marrying older women may risk having children with physical or mental weaknesses.

### Practical Qualities for a Lasting Marriage

A successful marriage is not just spiritual—it is practical.

- A man must be industrious and financially responsible.

"He could be a good man, even a Christian," but if he cannot manage money or provide, he is unprepared for family life.

- Young women should learn life skills and self-sufficiency, not just wait for a husband.

Many parents prepare sons to earn but neglect to teach daughters how to manage a home or support themselves. This leaves them vulnerable.

### Satan's Trap: The Myth That Marriage = Happiness

Many youth believe that they must marry to be happy—a lie from Satan. Without self-control and preparation, they rush into binding relationships, unprepared to maintain them.

This has led even among believers to:

- Hasty marriages
- Separations and divorces
- Turmoil in the church

### God's Perfect Model: Mature, Equal, Loving Partners

God did not leave Adam to wander alone. He provided a fitting companion—not inferior, not superior, but equal in love and purpose.

"God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. . . . it was one of the first gifts of God to man,



and it is a gift that is blessed.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46

From the very beginning:

- They were mature adults
- Spiritually united
- Emotionally balanced
- Financially stable
- In a home
- With purpose

God’s model shows that marriage should be based on maturity, readiness, and divine guidance—not rushed feelings or external pressure.

#### Final Word: Wait on God

Adam did not chase a wife—he waited on God to provide the perfect match.

Do the same.

Your Creator is invested in your joy. Wait on His timing, His wisdom, and His provision.

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” *Philippians 2:3–4*

#### For Additional Studies:

- *The Adventist Home*, p. 79–93
- *Understanding Ellen White*, p. 185

# 200+

## Questions to discuss Before Marriage

By Makoto Matsumoto

**B**enjamin Franklin once said, “Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, and half shut afterwards.” Love has a way of clouding our judgment, making us believe our partner is the perfect match. In the early stages of a relationship, it may feel like you will never face any serious challenges together. But as time passes, differences begin to surface, sometimes leading to doubts about whether you chose the right person. Many couples believe their love is unique, yet countless marriages have struggled because of this initial blindness. However, marriage can happen only once in life, and some couples realize their mistake too late.

That is why truly understanding your partner before marriage is essential. Take the time to explore your values, beliefs, and expectations for the future. Differences are natural—after all, you come from distinct backgrounds. The real question is: “Are these differences ones I can understand and live with, or are they deal-breakers?”

To help guide these important conversations, here are some key questions to ask each other. We will start with lighter topics, such as daily habits and routines, before diving into deeper discussions about finances, family, and long-term goals. Let’s begin!



## Lifestyle

Small differences in daily routines can accumulate over time, leading to frustration. That is why it is important to understand each other's habits before marriage. Setting expectations and agreeing on certain rules can help create a harmonious living environment. For areas where your preferences do not align, it might be best to allow each other some personal space.

### Will Our Lifestyles Align?

1. What are your usual sleep and wake-up times?
2. What time do you typically return home?

### Cleanliness & Organization

3. Do you feel comfortable lying on the bed without showering?
4. How often—and how thoroughly—do you clean the house?
5. Do you prefer a strictly organized living space, or are you more relaxed about tidiness?

### Living Space Preferences

6. Do you prefer a spacious home or a cozy one?
7. Do you enjoy decorating your home?
8. Would you like to have a personal space of your own within our home?
9. Where do you envision us living?
10. Are there any locations you would strongly prefer to avoid?

### Church Life

11. Would you support your spouse's involvement in church activities?
12. Would you like us to pray together as a couple?
13. Do you expect to attend church weekly?
14. How would you feel if we were called to be paid missionaries? What if it required us to move abroad?

### Other Lifestyle Considerations

15. Do you have any unique lifestyle habits I should know about?
16. Do you like playing music or background videos while at home?
17. How do you prefer to spend your free time?
18. Are you a light sleeper? Do small noises wake you up easily?
19. Do you enjoy hosting friends at home?
20. Do you want pets in our home? If so, what kind?

## Food & Health Habits

Understanding each other's eating habits, health choices, and medical beliefs is essential for a smooth and harmonious life together. Differences in diet, healthcare preferences, and self-care routines can impact a relationship, so it is important to discuss them early on.

### Eating Habits & Preferences

21. Do you prefer home-cooked meals, takeout, or dining out?
22. What cultural influences shape your diet?
23. Are there any foods you always eat or completely avoid?
24. Do you eat breakfast regularly?
25. Do you enjoy late-night snacks?

### Health & Wellness

26. How do you maintain your health and well-being?
27. How often do you exercise?
28. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions I should be aware of?
29. Do you have any allergies or dietary restrictions?

### Medical Beliefs & Practices

30. How often do you go for medical check-ups?
31. What are your views on vaccinations?
32. Do you prefer conventional medicine, natural remedies, or a mix of both?
33. What are your thoughts on surgeries and blood transfusions?
34. How do you feel about alternative therapies (e.g., acupuncture, homeopathy, chiropractic care)?
35. What are your thoughts on mental health treatment, such as therapy or medication?
36. How do you feel about fasting or detox diets?

## Household Chores & Responsibilities

Managing a home requires teamwork, and discussing expectations in advance can help avoid misunderstandings. It is important to be honest about tasks you dislike or struggle with—after all, they still need to get done!

### Dividing Household Responsibilities

37. Who should cook, and who should wash the dishes?
38. How should we divide laundry and cleaning duties?
39. How often should we do laundry?

### Adjusting Responsibilities with Life Changes

40. (For couples who both work) How should we adjust household responsibilities if one of us quits our job?
41. (For couples where one person works) How should we divide chores if we both start working?
42. How should we handle household chores if we have a baby?

### Personal Views & Preferences

43. Do you see certain chores as "men's jobs" or "women's jobs"? If so, which ones? (e.g., "I think grocery shopping is a woman's job," or "I believe cleaning the toilet is a man's job.")
44. Are there any chores you absolutely hate doing? (e.g., taking out the garbage, scrubbing the bathroom, etc.)
45. Are there any household tasks you're not confident about? (e.g., cooking, fixing appliances, changing light bulbs, etc.)

### Manners & Expectations in Marriage

As couples grow more comfortable with each other, the "honeymoon phase" naturally fades, revealing everyday habits and behaviours. While comfort is a beautiful part of marriage, it is helpful to set expectations for maintaining attraction, respect, and romance. It is worth discussing these details openly rather than assuming they do not matter!

### Physical Attraction & Presentation

46. How important are physical looks to you?
47. If physical attraction were no longer a factor, what would be left in our relationship?

### Everyday Etiquette & Boundaries

48. Are there any personal etiquette rules you would like me to follow, no matter how comfortable we become? (e.g., dressing appropriately at home, showering regularly, brushing teeth first thing in the morning, avoiding certain behaviours like burping or farting in front of each other, etc.)
49. What should we do to keep the "spark" alive even after 10 years? (e.g., staying in shape, dressing nicely even when it's just the two of us, small romantic gestures, etc.)
50. What is completely unacceptable in marriage, no matter the circumstances?

### Personal Time & Hobbies

Marriage is about togetherness, but maintaining individuality is just as important. Everyone needs time for personal interests, relaxation, and self-care. Discussing these needs early on can help prevent misunderstandings and ensure mutual respect for each other's space.

### Hobbies & Personal Interests

51. Are there any hobbies that are especially important to you? (e.g., "I want to keep playing sports on weekends," "I'd like to take vacations with close friends," "Please don't throw away my collection," etc.)
52. Are there hobbies you prefer to do alone versus together?

### Alone Time & Personal Space

53. Do you need or want regular time alone? (e.g., "I need 10 minutes of quiet tea time in the morning," "I like having 3-4 hours to myself on weekends," "Sometimes, I'd like to take a solo trip," etc.)
54. Do you believe a married couple should do everything together, or do you think maintaining separate activities is important?

### Values & Vision for the Future

Marriage is a lifelong journey built on shared values, mutual understanding, and a clear vision for the future. Discussing these topics openly can help ensure alignment and strengthen your relationship.

### Goals & Life Purpose

55. What are your short-term goals?
56. What are your long-term goals?
57. What do you believe is the purpose of life?
58. How do you define a successful marriage?

### Past & Personal History

59. Do you have any unresolved issues from past relationships?
60. Have you ever been involved in criminal activity? If so, what happened?

### Understanding Our Commitment

61. Why do we want to marry each other?
62. Why have you chosen me as your future spouse?
63. What are your top priorities in life?



64. How long do you think we should be engaged before getting married?
65. What concerns or fears do you have about marriage?
66. Is there anyone opposed to our marriage? If so, why?
67. Is there anything important about you that I don't know yet?
68. What, if anything, would be a cause for divorce in your eyes?
69. What do you consider "abuse" in a relationship?

### **Roles & Responsibilities in Marriage**

70. What are your expectations for each of our roles as husband and wife?
71. What kind of spouse do you aspire to be?

### **Marriage vs. Courtship**

72. What do you think is the biggest difference between dating and marriage?
73. What made you decide that I'm the person you want to marry?
74. How do you picture our life together in 10 years?

### **Expectations from Each Other**

Marriage is a journey of love, partnership, and shared dreams. Communicating expectations early helps build a strong foundation, ensuring both partners feel valued, loved, and understood. Let's talk about what we hope for in our married life and what's realistic for us.

### **Vision for Marriage & Romance**

75. What do you picture as the ideal marriage for us?
76. How often should we go on dates?
77. How do you want me to express love after we get married? (e.g., "Kiss me before you go to work," "Tell me I'm beautiful even as I age," "Surprise me with flowers once in a while," "I'd love to celebrate these anniversaries," etc.)
78. How often do you think we should say "I love you" to each other?

### **Shared Activities & Traditions**

79. Are there specific things you'd like us to do together in marriage? (e.g., "I want us to always eat breakfast together," "Take me on a walk when I have a bad day," "Let's go on a family vacation once a year," "Let's have dedicated conversation days," "I want us to work out together to stay healthy," etc.)

80. What family traditions would you like to establish in our home?
81. How do you envision supporting each other's personal growth after marriage?
82. What are some things you would like to learn or accomplish together as a couple?

### **Love & Affection**

83. How do you naturally communicate love? (e.g., words of affirmation, physical touch, acts of service, quality time, gifts, etc.)
84. What makes you feel most loved?
85. How do you feel about public displays of affection (kissing, holding hands, etc.)?
86. Should we continue giving each other gifts after marriage?
87. What anniversaries or special days would you like to celebrate together?

### **Conflict Resolution & Communication**

Understanding how we approach conflict and communicate during disagreements is essential for a healthy relationship. Let's talk about how we handle arguments, apologies, and what we both expect when challenges arise.

### **Approach to Conflict**

88. When we have a disagreement, how do you think the conflict should be resolved?
89. What would you do if we have differing opinions on something important?
90. Do you tend to suppress your feelings, or do you explode all at once when upset?
91. After an argument, do you tend to hold a grudge for a long time?
92. Is there a specific point or behaviour that makes you lose control during a disagreement?
93. How do you expect your spouse to express anger in a healthy way?
94. When you're in a bad mood, how would you like me to handle it?

### **Apologies & Mediation**

95. Do you have a hard time saying sorry?
96. What makes an apology feel sincere to you?
97. When should we consider bringing in a mediator to help resolve marital conflict?

### **Support Systems & Boundaries**

98. Who, if anyone, would you confide in outside of our marriage if we were having problems?



99. Are there any specific topics that are particularly sensitive for you?

### Improvement & Growth

100. Is there anything you'd like me to change about how I deal with conflict?

### Stress Management

Life will have both joyful moments and challenging ones. It's important to discuss how we can support each other through stressful, frustrating, or sad times. Here's how we might approach these situations together:

### Communication & Reactions During Stress

101. Do you feel like you can communicate with me about anything and everything, even under stressful circumstances?

102. How do you typically respond to stress, grief, and conflict?

- Do you tend to avoid it?
- Does it intimidate you?
- Do you fight fair?
- Do you yell or raise your voice?
- Do you intimidate others?
- Do you withdraw or shut down?

### Understanding Stress Triggers

103. When do you typically feel stressed? (e.g., heavy traffic, being vented on by a boss, a project not going well, excessive menstrual pain, etc.)

104. What embarrasses you the most?

105. Is there anything small, yet frustrating, that tends to irritate you? (e.g., sticky skin in summer, piled-up dirty dishes, etc.)

### Coping & Support

106. How do you cope with stress or resolve it?

107. What do you do when you feel overwhelmed and can't bear it anymore?

108. What would you want me to do for you after a long, stressful day?

109. How should we make decisions during times of major crisis (e.g., health emergencies, financial struggles)?

### Differences

While opposites can attract, differences between partners may also cause challenges over time. Re-

flecting on these differences before marriage can help ensure a deeper understanding and smoother relationship.

### Identifying Our Differences

110. In what ways do we differ from each other?

- Stable vs. Challenging
- Planned vs. Impromptu
- Slow vs. Fast
- Emotional vs. Rational
- Extrovert vs. Introvert
- Positive vs. Negative
- Love staying home vs. Love hanging out
- Literal vs. Conservative

### Addressing Discomfort & Conflict

111. Have you ever felt uncomfortable because of our differences?

112. If we encounter problems due to our differences, what do you think we should do?

113. How much can you understand and accept me being this way?

### Weaknesses

If there are any concerns or complaints, now is the perfect time to share them. Don't assume your partner will change after marriage. Open communication about each other's weaknesses can lead to better understanding and growth together.

### Personality & Habits

114. Is there any aspect of my personality that you would like me to improve? (e.g., I wish you were more plan-based, less short-tempered, kinder when pointing out mistakes, etc.)

115. Is there any habit of mine you would like me to fix? (e.g., I hope you stop shaking your legs, hold back on shopping, or avoid speaking with food in your mouth, etc.)

### Actions & Behaviour

116. Is there any action or behaviour of mine that you'd like me to change? (e.g., Please don't treat me like a little kid, don't rush me when I'm slow, or please meet my friends more often, etc.)

### Friends

It's natural to have close friendships, but when one partner is closer to others, it's important to set mutual standards and expectations. This helps pre-

vent feelings of neglect or betrayal and ensures mutual understanding.

### **Boundaries & Expectations with Friends**

- 117. Who is a really important friend to you?
- 118. How often do you think it's okay for your spouse to go out for personal social appointments?
- 119. Would you be okay if I went out quickly if a friend called me at night?
- 120. Are you comfortable with me going on a vacation with friends of the opposite gender?
- 121. What would you say if my ex wanted to meet up with me?

### **Social Boundaries & Trust**

- 122. Is there anyone in my friend group that you're not a fan of?
- 123. Are you confident in saying no if a friend asks for a difficult favour?
- 124. What if our anniversary falls on the same day as a plan with friends?
- 125. What does "cheating" mean to you in the context of friendship or marriage?

## **Finances**

Money can be a major source of stress in marriage. Having open discussions about finances ensures both partners are aligned in their financial perspectives and goals.

### **Financial Perspective & Attitudes**

- 126. What is your definition of wealth?
- 127. How important is money to you?
- 128. Is it important to you to have a certain standard of living?
- 129. Should we manage money together or separately?
- 130. How should we manage shared finances?
- 131. Do you think we should tell each other about every penny we spend?
- 132. How much of each person's salary should go into savings?

### **Income, Savings & Spending**

- 133. How much is your annual income?
- 134. How much money have you saved so far?
- 135. How much do you spend on your hobbies?
- 136. How much money do you spend on your social relationships?
- 137. On what categories do you tend to spend the most? (e.g., clothing, food, entertainment, vacations, etc.)

138. Which items do you view as necessary to have vs. nice-to-have?

139. Is there anything you're currently saving for to buy? (e.g., a car, camera, etc.)

### **Tithes & Offerings**

- 140. How important are tithes and offerings to you? Is it something you consider first or last when spending money?
- 141. How much do you typically contribute in offerings?

### **Budgeting, Loans & Debt**

- 142. How should money be budgeted in our marriage?
- 143. How much money do you think we should allocate for individual expenses?
- 144. Do you have any debt?
- 145. Does anything justify going into debt in your view?
- 146. How often do you use credit cards?
- 147. What is your credit score like?
- 148. How much are you able to borrow if needed?

### **Investments, Emergency Planning & Retirement**

- 149. What's your perspective on investments?
- 150. How should we prepare for financial emergencies?
- 151. When should we start preparing for retirement?

### **Lending Money**

152. What is your idea of lending money to friends or family?

### **Financial Goals & Future Planning**

- 153. What are our financial goals?
- 154. How do you envision us managing our finances in the future?

## **Work and Career**

Work and career are significant parts of life, but when family dynamics come into play, it's essential to have clear communication about expectations and priorities. Let's discuss our perspectives on work, career ambitions, and the balance between them.

### **Career Path & Work History**

- 155. Is your current job a career or just a means to earn money?
- 156. What's your work history? Have you been able to maintain a job for a long period of time?
- 157. What aspects are important to you when choosing a workplace?



### **Career Goals & Plans**

- 158. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- 159. Do you aspire to pursue a post-graduate program or start your own business?
- 160. How socially successful do you want to be?

### **Work-Life Balance**

- 161. How much time do you typically spend at work?
- 162. How much time do you think is too much to spend at work?
- 163. What is the ideal ratio for you between work and holidays?
- 164. How do you plan to balance career and family life once we have children?
- 165. What's your ideal work-life balance, and how do you think we can support each other in achieving that?
- 166. How long do you plan to work?
- 167. Can you envision yourself relocating to another country for work?

### **Future Planning**

- 168. How would you feel if one of us had to put our career on hold for a while to focus on family?
- 169. If one of us had to quit their job, who do you think would make that sacrifice?
- 170. Would you be willing to give up on your dream career for the sake of your family?
- 171. What do you want to do after retirement?

## **Family**

Marriage not only unites two individuals but also brings two families together. Understanding your partner's family dynamics and being mindful of them is crucial for a harmonious relationship. Let's discuss how we can navigate our families post-marriage.

### **Relationships with Family Members**

- 172. How would you describe your relationship with your family members? Are you close with your parents and siblings?
- 173. How often do you express gratitude to your parents?
- 174. How did you used to resolve conflicts with your parents?
- 175. Do your parents interfere in your matters often?

### **Expectations and Boundaries**

- 176. Is there anything your parents expect from me?
- 177. What type of relationship do you hope I will have with your family?
- 178. Is there anything I should be mindful of when I meet your family?

179. Is there anything you expect me to do for your parents?
180. Do you have any tips for me on how to build a good relationship with your family?

### Handling Family Conflicts

181. How should we react if our parents try to involve themselves in matters between us?
182. What would you do if your mom and I got into a conflict?
183. Is there anything that my family has made you feel uncomfortable or upset about?

### Visiting & Celebrating with Family

184. How often should we visit our parents?
185. How much should we celebrate each other's family events (e.g., anniversaries, birthdays)?
186. How do we plan to split holidays with each other's families?
187. How does your family typically spend holidays?
188. How often do your relatives gather together?
189. How often should we contact (call/text) in-laws?

### Living Proximity & Caregiving

190. How often should we visit your in-laws?
191. Do you hope to live close to your family or away?
192. What if our parents lose their health, and we have to take care of them?
193. What if our parents move to our town?

### Concerns & Admiration

194. Do you have any concerns about any of my family members?
195. What did you admire about how your mother and father treated each other?

## Family Building

The decision to have children is a significant one and requires careful planning and mutual agreement. It's important to discuss potential scenarios and make sure both partners are aligned on key aspects of family building.

### Desires and Plans for Children

196. Do you want to have children?
197. How many kids do you think we should have?
198. When do you think we should start having children?
199. Is it okay to use contraception? If yes, which one should we use?

### Challenges and Unexpected Situations

200. What if pregnancy happens unexpectedly?



201. What if things don't go as planned? (e.g., feeling overwhelmed after one child, conceiving a boy when you wanted a girl, facing financial difficulties, etc.)
202. What if our child has a disability?

### Delivery & Parenting Preferences

203. Is there a preferred method of delivery for you? (e.g., vaginal, cesarean)
204. What are your thoughts on adoption?

## Child-Raising

The way we raise our children reflects our values, beliefs, and parenting styles. It's important to discuss these aspects openly to align our approach and build a shared vision for parenting.

### Parenting Style and Values

205. What kind of person do you hope our children will become? (e.g., classic golden child, free-spirited, etc.)
206. How do you picture yourself as a parent? (e.g., a non-expressive dad, a mom who's playful like a friend, free-range parent, strict parent, etc.)
207. Do you think sons and daughters should be raised differently?
208. What values or morals do you think are most important to teach our children?

### Discipline and Communication

209. How do you plan to discipline our children? (e.g., using words to explain, chair-time, scolding with strict words, etc.)
210. Do you think physical punishment is necessary?
211. How should we handle situations where our children act out or make poor decisions?
212. What's your approach to handling a rebellious child or a child with special needs?

### Parenting Approaches and Background

213. How do you anticipate raising our children?
- The same way you were raised
  - Completely different from the way you were raised
  - A mixture of both

### Parenting Environment and Schooling

214. What things should we be careful about in front of our children? (e.g., arguments, etc.)
215. Will one of us stay home with the children, or will we use childcare?

216. What type of school system do you prefer for our children? (e.g., public school, private school, Christian school, or homeschool?)
217. How much should we include extracurricular activities in their education?

### Education and Future Opportunities

218. Do you believe post-secondary education is important for children?
219. Are you interested in raising kids here or sending them abroad for education?

### Time and Commitment

220. How much time do you plan to spend with the children on weekends?
221. How much maternity/paternity leave do you think we should take?
222. Do you think it's good to let our children be raised by our parents?
223. How do you envision maintaining our relationship while raising children (e.g., prioritizing date nights, alone time, etc.)?

### Health and Safety

224. How do you feel about immunizing our children?

## Faith

Marriage should take place within the same church. Yet, that does not guarantee your partner's spirituality, just as our membership does not guarantee our salvation. Therefore, ensuring that you both share a common understanding and align your beliefs before moving forward is important. Therefore, in addition to discussing these questions, take the time to review *The Principles of Faith* together thoroughly. And, of course, always talk about Jesus. If He becomes the centre of conversation between you two, He will guide your marriage preparation.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:6-8

Amen.

# LOUD CRY NEWS

WHAT HAPPENED, IS HAPPENING AND WILL HAPPEN

## The Youth Go West

By Jason Climaco, Canadian Field Youth Department Leader



“This is more like a *survival camp!*” said one of the youth who attended the most recent Spring Youth Camp this past May in Mission, British Columbia. And as the Canadian Field Youth Leader (and attendee of said survival camp), I couldn’t have agreed more!

Giving the youth an extended overnight experience in one of Canada’s most beautiful and naturally diverse provinces was at the top of our wishlist in the Youth Department. The mountains, rivers, ocean, forests, and wildlife were among some of what we wanted our youth to see and experience. Naturally, we prayed



for God’s leading, worked with a dedicated group of youth from Alberta and British Columbia, and got to planning. Finally, after several months of brainstorming and finding what fit best, the camp was greenlit. And so our youth from Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and the USA packed their sleeping bags, put on their boots, and made their way to Mission.

As most attendees will agree, this camp tested their limits. As we camped on rugged/sloped terrain and experienced heavy rainfall, we learned to depend on God for strength and on one another for support. Interestingly, our theme “Onward Christian Soldiers” truly fit our overarching experience during our 3 days together. Through our worship services, activities, and real-life experiences, we learned how God prepares His best soldiers through challenging yet meaningful experiences.

And so if you are interested in getting out of your comfort zone, making new memories (and getting a little wet in the process), we invite you to be a part of our next camp with the Canadian Field Youth Department.

Yours,  
Br. Jason

## Join our next camp ↓

AUG 4-7

# SUMMER YOUTH & FAMILY CAMP

Earl Rowe Provincial Park, ON

4998 Concession Rd 7, Alliston, ON L9R 1W1



Link to Sign-Up!



DEADLINE JULY 5<sup>TH</sup> 2025

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# Busking Day Sing the Light-Calgary

By Mami Matsumoto, Canadian Field Music Department Leader



“**Y**ou are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14–16, NKJV

On May 31st, the Canadian Field Music Department had the privilege of hosting a special busking event to share the light of the gospel through heavenly music, bringing glory to our Father in heaven.

The first busking event took place at Peace Park in Calgary, Alberta, led by the Calgary Church Youth and the Canadian Field Music Department. Since January, the youth have dedicated their time and talents, preparing a total of 17 songs to present in the public park. Through this musical outreach,

they experienced what it means to be the light of the world, shining for the honour and glory of God.

In addition to the youth musicians, others also contributed their talent through missionary collaboration with the Calgary Church Missionary Department. Youth volunteers shared truth-filled literature, such as *The Great Controversy* and *Steps to Christ*, with those who stopped to listen.

We are deeply thankful for God's guidance and blessings upon every aspect of this event, and we pray that all who were present were touched by His Spirit.

Video recordings of the event will be available soon on the Canadian Field's official YouTube channel, "IMS Canada".



## Voice of Youth Box



"Voice of Youth Box" is a unique online space where you can share your voice. It can be questions about faith, requests for advice about your concerns, suggestions about the youth department plan, or any voice you would like to make! It is all anonymous, so feel free to share your deepest thoughts. Do you have anything to share? Please scan the QR code. Right here in this magazine, we will share our answers to some suggestions/questions sent through this box.

## Join Our Group!

If you are interested in joining our WhatsApp group chat, please send your contact information to our email!

[canadianreformyouth@gmail.com](mailto:canadianreformyouth@gmail.com)

## Follow Us!

Are you interested in seeing more posts and news about upcoming events? Follow the official social media accounts of Loud Cry Youth.

- Facebook: CanadianReformYouth
- Instagram: LoudCry.Youth
- Website: [www.4truth.ca/youth](http://www.4truth.ca/youth)



**“SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE,  
IN THE IMAGE OF GOD CREATED HE HIM;  
MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM.  
AND GOD BLESSED THEM.”**

**GENESIS 1:27–28**



**THE YOUNG MESSENGER**

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