

## **GETTING SERIOUSLY COMMITTED** **(Doing It the Right Way)**

He had recently graduated from university, and had started his first job a few months ago. She was in her third year of university. They knew each other from the youth group at church. He realized that he had some feelings towards her, but didn't know if she even noticed him. So he went to his father in confession and revealed his thoughts to him ...

Abouna: She is a nice girl, she is my daughter in confession and I know she is not committed.

Boy: I wonder if she would give me a chance to know her better.

Abouna: Why don't you ask her?

Boy (surprised): You really mean that?

Abouna: Of course. Girls prefer that the boy speaks to them directly. They resent it if you go to her family before you know her opinion.

The boy asked Abouna to pray for him and for her. He thought about what Abouna told him and waited for an opportunity to talk to her. All the time he was praying to God, "God, if this is your will, then make it easy for me and for her." He committed himself to God saying, "Thy will be done."

A week later, he went to a friend's birthday party, and there she was in front of him. Is it possible that my prayers have been answered, he wondered to himself. He said hello and socialized with everyone for a while. Then he went to chat with her. At an opportune moment, he told her about his feelings and asked if she would give him and herself a chance to get to know each other better. The girl remained silent for a moment, then asked him if he would give her some time to think about it, and he agreed.

The girl was very wise, she did not close the door and yet did not want to give him the impression that she is the kind of girl that would throw herself at the first guy who whispered in her ears. She also needed time to think about it in a rational way and to consult with her Father in confession. She told Abouna about what happened.

Abouna: How do you feel about him?

Girl: I am not sure. I think he is a nice guy.

Abouna: Then why don't you give him a chance? He is my son in confession and I know that he is after a serious commitment.

Girl: He asked me to go out with him.

Abouna: Since I know that he is serious about this, I see nothing wrong with that, provided you do it with your parents' permission. If you have problems with your parents about this, tell me and I will

talk to them.

The girl told her parents everything. They didn't object, especially when they knew that Abouna did not object.

He phoned her a few days later to ask her whether she made up her mind, and she agreed to give him a date. At the time agreed on, he went to her house, greeted her parents and asked their permission to take their daughter out. The girl's father asked him where he was taking their daughter, and when he would bring her home. The boy told him where they were going and that he would bring her home by twelve o'clock. The father stared at him and he quickly corrected himself, "Eleven o'clock!" The boy admired her parents for being broad-minded and yet not permissive.

They went to a small restaurant for dinner where they spoke together, each one observing the other. She was amazed to discover that even though he looked quiet, he could be very witty. He liked the way she dressed, elegant yet reserved. There was a hint of make-up that enhanced rather than covered her natural features. Whenever he said something funny, she would give him a big smile rather than laugh loudly.

After dinner they took a stroll around the nearby shops. They were amazed to discover that they had similar tastes in many things like furniture and clothes.

On the way home, he asked her for another date. She told him she would see how busy she was and then tell him.

He phoned her the next day to thank her for the evening, and when he asked to see her again she agreed.

Next date he took her to a museum of art. They walked through the exhibits and talked about what they saw. He wanted to find out whether she was an intellectual girl or just a pretty face. He asked her about the last book she had read and she asked him about his favourite author. They both had a satisfying intellectual discussion that day.

Their third date was on a National holiday. They went to a park to enjoy nature. They walked for miles and talked for hours about everything. They spoke in very general terms about marriage; what they thought constituted a successful marriage, whether a wife should go to work or stay home, how many children should a family have and how soon. They spoke about co-operation between married couples in doing chores around the house. They also spoke about the place of God in a happy marriage. They were amazed to discover how much they had in common. That day, they both went home feeling as if they had known each other for all their lives.

Throughout their new relationship, they both prayed fervently to God. They prayed for each other, they asked God to guide their feet. They submitted themselves totally to the will of God, saying, "Thy will be done." They kept their father in confession informed of the progress of their relationship and asked for his prayers; and he promised to put their names on the altar and remember them in each mass.

One day, they were out together, and it happened! Neither of them planned for it to happen, neither of them was prepared for it, but it came so naturally, so spontaneously. He suddenly found himself telling her that he loves her. The words did not seem to be his... he thought he spoke so soon and wanted to hold back, but she told him she had the same feeling. He asked her if she would marry him, she said she would, on one condition, that they wait for her graduation from University, and he agreed.

The next day he brought his parents to meet her parents, to agree on a date for their engagement.



## **GETTING INVOLVED TOO EARLY (Doing It the Wrong Way)**

Some young people in their late teens think that it is not harmful to get emotionally involved with a person from the other sex. Those young people often get themselves into this without thinking about the consequences.

Before getting involved, a young person should ask himself or herself two questions:

1. Am I ready to get married if this relationship develops into love?
2. Is the other person in a position that he/she can get married if love develops?

The reason why young people don't ask themselves these questions is that they live in a fantasy. They think that no harm will be done if they get involved emotionally even if the prospect of marriage is four or five years away, or even longer! They imagine that they can keep this relationship without any problems, until they are ready for marriage five or six years later. Unfortunately, this is not the way it goes!

Let us consider the scenario of two persons in their late teens getting involved emotionally, and let us look into the consequences:

At the time, they will think that they are made for one another and that they will never change their minds, but as they grow older and more mature, they will discover that this is not what they really wanted in their partner. As they go to university, they will meet other people, they will start to compare and change their minds.

It is the boys that usually change their minds, but girls too can wake up to the fact that their "taste" has changed, their requirements of the man they want to marry have become more refined.

A boy in his late teens will be looking for beauty and physical attraction and so would a girl. Later on, as they go to university, a young man will add an intellectual component to his list of requirements, so much so, that he may compromise a little on the physical characteristics of the girl of his dreams, as long as she can satisfy him intellectually.

A girl at this stage will also have other considerations in mind than physical attraction. She will start thinking in terms of character compatibility, dependability, and financial security. In other words, she will be looking for a kind, mature, dependable, responsible person even if he is not the greatest looking guy on the block.

Later still, a spiritual component will enter into the equation. A boy would be then looking for someone who is not only reasonably attractive both physically and intellectually, but also someone who would bring him closer to God, and so would a girl.

The fact of the matter is that as we grow older, we become more mature, and the characteristics of the "girl of my dreams" or my "prince charming" will definitely change. That is why it is unrealistic to get involved when you both know you can't get married for four or five years. Teen-age feelings will most probably change.

Whether it is the boy or the girl who changes his mind, the breaking up hurts the other party very much. The "broken heart" often lamented in songs is a reality. Depression, thoughts of suicide, and changes in the personality often follow a broken relationship.

Study and performance at school are the earliest casualties of such relationships. Regardless of the outcome, the new relationship puts much demands on the young mind. He or she may be staring at the book but lost in a day dream. People around may notice what is happening, and sooner or later will find out.

One of the perils of such untimely relationships is the effect they have on one's reputation. Unfortunately, girls suffer more in this area. It is unfair, but true that society is more critical in evaluating a girl's behaviour than a boy's. A girl's reputation can be tarnished from gossip. Often her best friends will let out the secret to their best friends ... and so on. The boy may boast about his relationship in front of other boys. Even outsiders, nosy people with nothing better to do, may watch the young couple and broadcast all the details about their relationship, often embellishing the facts to make the story more appealing to the audience.

Another peril that besets such early relationships is the possibility of falling into sin. At the start, you will tell me, "that is impossible, we would never think of that", but so did David, Samson and King Solomon. You see, no one who has known God would commit sin voluntarily, but anyone, even people with deep spiritual feelings, can slip into sin if they allow themselves to walk the treacherous road of untimely emotional involvement. This happens because the devil is far more clever than anyone of us. He has thousands of years of experience in dragging even saints into deadly sins.

This is how the devil leads young people who never intended to sin into trouble. There are basically two "techniques" that the devil uses against young people.

The first is called the "ambush technique", and this he uses with people with very strong religious feelings. The devil holds a "conference" with his demons to plot a strategy to ambush the two innocent young people, say six months later. The demons will create all sorts of situations to make these two people meet frequently. They will work on their emotions making their attraction towards each other stronger every day. In order to deceive them, the devils of lust withhold their attacks against them to convince them that this is a "pure" relationship and to give them a false sense of security.

Deceived by this, they start to become careless, they are thus led into seeing each other alone in some place or another. At first, they may be sitting there for long times without even holding hands, until they become self confident that their relationship is chaste and there is no harm in doing this frequently.

On the appointed day of the ambush, the demons of lust attack them suddenly. The poor couple feel the fiery darts of the enemy coming from all directions. Unprepared for this attack because of the deception of the demons, their reason and their will is paralyzed, they cannot believe what is happening to them... suddenly they wake up to the ugly fact that they have committed sin.

The other technique is called the "gradual technique" and this, the devil uses against young people whose religious feelings are not very strong. The two would start seeing each other, and as they grow more familiar with one another, their feelings towards one another grow stronger. They start holding hands, later they start kissing and hugging. The more they drift into this, the more their desire for each other increases. Even when they are away from each other, they become attacked by lustful thoughts towards each other. Each time they meet, they will find it more difficult to contain themselves. Their will to resist temptation weakens gradually. They will look for a way out but there will be none. The prospect of marriage seems like light years away, and they start to despair. It is at this moment of despair that they may succumb to temptation, even against the strongest protests of their consciences.

Whatever technique the devil uses, the result is the same, utter misery. It is a remarkable thing

that happens time and time again, that following illicit relationships, love disappears, only lust remains.

The road to sin is often a one way street because instead of seeking help from their father in confession if they have one, they keep it to themselves. Although repentance is always possible, it is difficult, and without guidance through confession, almost impossible.

As time goes by, the feelings start changing. The boy is usually the one who walks away. He blames it all on the girl saying, "if she was not a loose girl, she would have never given her virginity away." It is the same thing that the first man, Adam said, "Eve made me do it". Doubts start lingering in the boy's mind. He has doubts about the past, has she done this with other boys before me, seeing she is that easy? He has doubts about the future, will she give in that easily to another man that chases her after we get married? With a suspicious past and an uncertain future, the boy usually walks away. And, after all, he has already gotten the prize (sex) without paying the price (wedding), so why should he bother?

An even worse scenario happens if the girl gets pregnant, and it is not uncommon for a girl to get pregnant following a single sexual encounter. What usually follows is very tragic. The girl may fall into the temptation of abortion, adding the sin of murder to that of fornication, or if there is a little conscience left, the boy may feel obliged to marry her. He may have to quit university and find a job, any job, to support his wife and child.

The wedding will be unceremonious, the marriage at best rocky. The boy will always resent the fact that he was forced to marry her. He will always blame her for ruining his career, and they will live unhappily ever after.