

CHAPTER 44

DATING — A VITAL DIMENSION IN YOUR AMBASSADOR EXPERIENCE

A whole new and exciting horizon has opened up to you here at Ambassador College.

Your days will be filled with challenging and rewarding opportunities. Vital knowledge will be given to you in classes. Clubs and activities will offer fun and valuable experiences. Dorm life can be filled with unity and friendship.

There is another rich opportunity offered to you at Ambassador College. That is dating.

Mr. Armstrong, in his founder's statement, explains that part of the basic knowledge in true values given at Ambassador is 'instruction in a right and healthy type of dating' (*Ambassador College 1983-85 Catalog*, p. 16).

Also, in *THE MISSING DIMENSION IN SEX*, Mr. Armstrong wrote, 'A date should be an event which adds to the mental, social, moral and spiritual character development of both boy and girl... Dating should be made interesting. But a date can be both interesting and at the same time stimulating, uplifting and a contribution to the very PURPOSE of life — character-building' (pp. 208-209).

Dating is a vital dimension in your Ambassador experience. It provides a valuable avenue for growth, character and personality development. As we begin a new year, let's look at some of the purposes for dating and the right approaches towards it.

• BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS

True and meaningful friendships contribute to a happy, abundant life. One purpose of dating is to help build these long-lasting relationships.

Friendship grows when we show concern for the feelings and interests of others. 'A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly' (Prov. 18:24). So, in your dating, concentrate on giving and building friendships.

Date widely. This gives you experience in relating to a broad range of different people. You'll find yourself learning how to interface with almost anyone and becoming, as Paul admonished, 'all things to all men' (I Cor. 9:22).

Avoid pairing-off in a premature romance. This is a poor foundation for any lasting relationship and damages the potential for becoming true friends. Instead, build strong bonds of brotherly love. These endure forever.

• UNDERSTANDING THE OPPOSITE SEX

What makes men 'tick'? Why do women act the way they do? Men and women have unique differences. The way they view life — their feelings, reactions and ways of doing things — are in some instances almost opposite.

In Satan's world, the 'battle of the sexes' is waged. Men and women oftentimes misunderstand each other. Ambassador College students have opportunity to gain a proper insight — through dating!

Date a wide variety of people — and date as often as your schedule will allow. If you limit yourself to a narrow range of fellow students, or rarely date at all, you probably won't gain a good understanding of the opposite sex. Accept the challenge to venture out and date.

The perspective you gain will benefit you throughout your life — especially in your future marriage. You'll also come to appreciate how our Creator made men and women to complement one another.

• ENRICHING EDUCATION

Textbooks can only go so far in teaching you about places you've never seen and things you've never done. Having the right social life can provide ways to enrich your education in these areas.

Ambassador College has students from all parts of the globe, each bringing his or her special cultural perspective.

As you associate with these different personalities — eating together in the Student Center, going to and from, classes and participating in College activities — you will be exposed to a wide variety of backgrounds. This can help you learn about the people, culture and geography of other lands.

There is also a myriad of talents, interests and experiences among Ambassador students from the U.S.A. Learning from them can also greatly broaden your education.

Take advantage of the unique social and cultural opportunities afforded you while at A.C. This will sharpen your skills in dealing with others and make you a more interesting and informed person.

• **GROWING IN CONFIDENCE**

Confidence in relating to others — along with friendliness and outgoing concern is an important quality of leadership. Dating is one of the most effective means of developing this attribute.

Confidence involves poise, self-assurance, ease in dealing with people and skill in handling different situations. This comes through practice and experience. Dating provides that experience.

If you feel ill at ease on dates, don't let this stop you from trying! The more you date, the more relaxed you will be. Nervousness will decrease and confidence will grow.

Try group dating also. This reduces the anxiety that sometimes occurs with one-on-one dates.

Concentrate on giving the other person an enjoyable time. This principle can change what might be a dull date into an interesting and successful one. Having many successful dates will greatly increase your confidence.

You will find yourself becoming a well-balanced, socially confident Ambassador.

• **LEARNING THE ART OF COMMUNICATION**

Ambassador classes and speech clubs will give you training in formal speaking situations. Dating gives practical experience in learning the art of communication in everyday settings.

It takes practice to tactfully express yourself and communicate well with different types of people. Socializing with others will help you gain this practice.

Learn how to say the right thing at the right time. *'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver'* (Prov. 25:11).

Express yourself and your thoughts with enthusiasm and color. Expand your vocabulary by learning and using new words.

Become an active listener. This involves giving others a chance to express themselves and showing sincere interest in what they have to say.

By taking advantage of dating opportunities at Ambassador, you'll increase your communication skills. You will grow in the art of encouraging fellow students and being a positive influence on them.

• **HAVING FUN AND FELLOWSHIP**

Ambassador College life is fast-paced. Between classes, work, clubs, activities and personal studies, you may find that relaxation comes at a premium. Dating can be a pleasant diversion from this busy load.

Use imagination! Take advantage of the mountains, beaches, parks, museums, and theaters which are close by in the area.

Dates don't have to cost money to be fun. The beautiful gardens on the campus grounds provide peaceful settings for enjoyable walks, conversation and fellowship. And don't forget the Frontier Room! Over the years, College students have found this an excellent spot for socializing.

Group dates expand the enjoyment since more can participate. Picnics and games such as volleyball or other team sports are refreshing activities.

Keep in mind that having fun and enjoying fellowship does not mean involving or emphasizing romantic interests. These dates should be for the purpose of breaking the routine, relaxing and just enjoying life to the full. Have fun! And strive to give others a good time.

• **GIVING & SERVING**

Dating is giving. Education, growth and fun are all important purposes of dating, but one of the primary goals should be giving to the other person.

Be thoughtful and considerate. Look out for the needs and interests of your date and concentrate on making the occasion relaxed and enjoyable.

Be open in sharing your thoughts and ideas and express genuine interest in those of your date.

Notice the individual who may be shy or a newcomer who hasn't yet made a lot of friends. Men, take the initiative to ask this type of girl for a date. On group outings, ladies, include the fellow who is having a hard time breaking in. Give of yourself! Think of others first!

Maintain a friendly outlook towards everyone. Don't be a respecter of persons.

Dating gives opportunities to practice the spiritual law of love that governs every human relationship. Apply God's Word to your dating experiences and you'll be amazed at the results!

• **PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE**

One of the ultimate purposes for dating is to lay a foundation for marriage. Out of the friendships you build may eventually emerge that 'special person' who will fit into your life. At that point your dating can become more serious, but keep in mind, this could take several years.

In the meantime, if you're wise, you won't rush into romance or become emotionally involved with a person after the third or fourth date. Nor will you limit yourself only to a few, select people. You'll date widely in order to mature and experience a broad variety of personalities.

Then, when it's time to consider marriage, you'll have laid a proper foundation and gained the wisdom to choose the right mate.

Throughout your college career, be sure to keep your priorities in view. Pray to God for help and guidance so that you'll not stray from His paths. Exercise restraint and seek His will. Remember that God is the ideal matchmaker.

These are the reasons why dating is a vital dimension in your Ambassador experience.

— END —