

The Three Stages of Courtship

	MUTUAL INTEREST	“COURTSHIP”	ENGAGEMENT
<i>Definition</i>	An informal time of evaluation and prayer on the part of the young man and his parents, and the young lady and her parents, to determine if entering into a time of committed courtship is best for both young people at this time.	“Courtship is a process by which a mature young man or young lady, along with their parents, seek to discern their God-given life partner. It involves the parents or authorities on both sides and yet allows for feelings and discernment from both of the young people involved.”	The final stage before marriage, where the hearts and lives of the young people become more firmly bonded together
<i>Basis for each stage</i>	Preceded by an unspoken interest on the part of one or both of the young people and/or their parents	Entered into with an understanding of an eventual commitment to marriage (not unbreakable at this point, but the majority of questions should have already been taken care of)	Preceded by careful evaluation and time spent growing together
<i>Beginning point</i>	Begins when the young man, in some way, approaches the young lady and her parents with a desire to court her	Begins when the young man requests the young lady’s father for permission to win her heart	Begins with a formal proposal
<i>Focus of each stage</i>	This is the time, before courtship begins, to thoroughly evaluate the maturity, character, and goals of the young man and woman	This is the time for the young man and young woman to work at becoming best friends through times of Bible study and prayer, long talks, and shared laughter	This is the time to plan a future life together
<i>Areas of discussion</i>	If the families have known each other for a while and the character of the young people is well known to both sets of parents, then this evaluation period could be fairly brief	Practical topics such as finances, children, housekeeping, wage-earning, etc. should be discussed during this period, either between the two young people or with the counsel and advice of both sets of parents	Plans for the wedding should be made, as well as the practical concerns of starting a home and life together
<i>Levels of protection</i>	Concentrate much more heavily on family and group settings in which to evaluate the young people	Depending on the age and maturity of the young people involved, more time should be spent alone in a safe environment (walks, dinner dates, talking on the front porch, etc.)	Perhaps at this point, depending again on the young people, a greater degree of intimacy may be allowed
<i>Prayer and Faith</i>	Make prayer a high priority, both as individual families and the young people and their parents as a group	Prayer and seeking the Lord’s will should remain a high priority, laying a good foundation for the future marriage	Prayer and study of the Word should remain a priority, as the couple plans their future ministry together
<i>Goal of each stage</i>	This is the time for mutual respect to be earned	This is the time for emotional honesty and transparency to be achieved	This is the time to become soul mates
<i>Ending point</i>	Ends when the young people and their families are at peace about pursuing courtship	Ends when the young man asks the young lady’s father for her hand in marriage	Ends on the wedding day