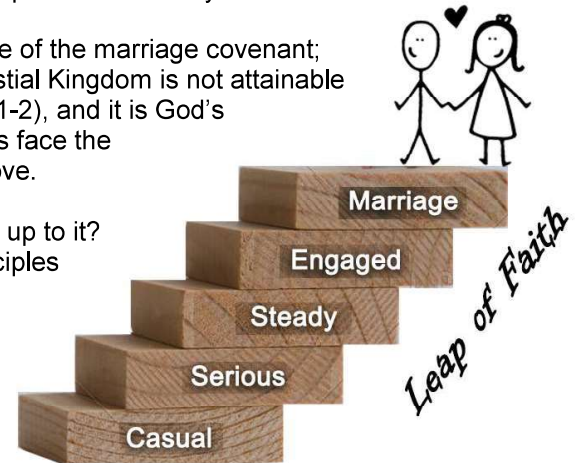


The Ladder of Love

Choosing a spouse is perhaps one of the most important decisions you will ever make in this life-time, and it's a decision that has both eternal and earthly consequences and blessings. Marriage is a divine institution that can bring couples: companionship, friendship, and love in this world – as well as eternal joy and eternal increase that starts in this life and extends eternally. Unfortunately, marriage can also be a decision that one or both spouses regret. The world is full of unhappy marriages, couples that can't trust each other, are not faithful to each other, and that end up in heart-ache, unhappiness, divorce – or even worse – living in a relationship with someone you don't love.

As members of Christ's restored church, we understand the sacred nature of the marriage covenant; and the eternal significance of marriage. The highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom is not attainable without the new and everlasting covenant of temple marriage (D&C 131: 1-2), and it is God's desire and plan for us to be joined together with a spouse that can help us face the challenges of life and experience the joys of family, friendship, and true love.

If marriage is that important, then how important is the process that leads up to it? This process is different for everyone, and there are many important principles that can make the process successful. Here are a few principles that will help you along this process – collectively we'll call this process "The Ladder of Love"



Steps to the Ladder:

Casual: Dating for recreation, fun, and to decide if the relationship has potential to move forward.

Serious: Strong feelings for the other person, often accompanied by appropriate physical intimacy.

Steady: A commitment of exclusivity and a desire to become engaged/married. Stay morally clean!

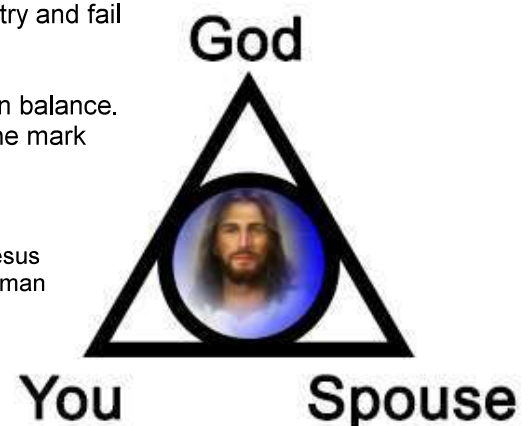
Engaged: A period of time to prepare for marriage and confirm your decision and commitment.

Marriage: The act of the eternal covenant- The start of a wonderful life together with your spouse.

Principles of Success:

- Communicate: Discuss this process (and these principles) early and often in your relationship.
- Know where each of you stand (on the ladder) mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally (DTR).
- Walk the ladder together or not at all - Never be more than 1 step apart.
 - One can wait for the other, or let the other know their limits on waiting. There needs to be limits.
 - I feel like we are not at the same place in this relationship. One of us needs to move or we need to _____.
 - I feel like we are not progressing in this relationship. What do you think would be a reasonable time-frame...
- Pray Hard – Both individuals should pray for each other and for inspiration throughout the entire process.
- Consider Everything: In-laws, children, history, habits, money, sex, health, personality, spirituality, work ethic.
 - Extra caution before marriage... Blinders on after marriage.
- Be Forgiving – Remember that neither of you are perfect.
- Exercise Faith – Live the gospel, and faithfully put your trust in the Lord. He will not lead you astray.
- Receive a Witness – Both individuals should receive a separate spiritual witness that it is right.
 - Moroni 10: 3-5 – John 14:26 – Gal. 5:22 – Matt. 7:7 – Luke 11:9 Seek, Find, Follow!
- Know when to say No. Be willing to let go.
 - Respect the decision of the other person – even if it is not the same as yours.
 - I love you, but I don't want you to marry me if I am not the right person for you.
- Don't let fear of failure make you fail: You can try and fail, try and fail, try and fail again...But the only time you really fail is when you fail to try again.
 - It's better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all.
- Put God First: If both of you truly seek for God's will, then you will be in balance. When you seek the will of self or spouse you run the risk of missing the mark and making mistakes. Matt: 6:33

"We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." ~Proclamation on the Family (1995)



Dating & Courtship Tips & Advice

- Set Goals & Have Desire (You gotta know what you want and want it bad enough to do what it takes to get it!)
- Share your goals and desires with Heavenly Father. Pray with faith, desire, and real intent. Ask the Lord to go before you and prepare the way; and ask him every day to guide your actions... then pray to know if you should continue relationships or move on.
- Be ready and willing to move on. Practice breaking up. Ways to Friend-Zone others.
- Go the Extra Mile. Buy flowers, leave thank you notes, text messages, social media compliments.
- Plan your work and work your plan!
- Be willing to take rejection. A thousand NO's may bring 5 YES's and 1 of those may "be the one!"
- Be persistent. Keep asking people out, even if the outcome seems bleak. Same principle as above.
- Be the type of person you are looking for (Live the gospel, be kind, genuine, humble, fun).
- Repent often. Live a clean life and be worthy to be married in the temple and give priesthood blessings.
- Avoid Pornography like the plague!!!
- Avoid time waiters (Youtube, ?, ?, ?)
- Appearance: No tattoos, physically fit, well groomed, well dressed. Drive a decent vehicle.
- Use social media to help you find... manage it to avoid limiting your options... use it to DTR.
- Set limits and rules for appropriate behavior (no sex before marriage, no petting, 4 feet on the floor), no alcohol or drugs, no R or X rated movies.
- Make good habits: scriptures, prayer, church, exercise, sleep.
- Have fun and enjoy life... Don't stress out too much.
- Do lots of first dates... don't be afraid to say no to 2nd dates.
- Be willing to give and love and serve without expecting anything in return... but use righteous judgement to determine if the other person is the same type of person (or not).
- Try hard to determine up front if the person you are interested in is: positive, kind, has integrity, shares's the same goals in life (big picture) as you , and is willing to serve. Make sure you find someone who is willing to work hard and has some history of working hard (sports, work, drill team, cheer, etc.).
- Never marry someone who doesn't have friends, doesn't care about others, or who hates his or her parents. Be careful of anyone who eats tons of junk food, doesn't exercise, or someone who is negative (winy), or talks bad about others.
- Ask your date how they got along with their missionary companions and room-mates... that will tell you a lot.
- Take them camping and fishing... How do they manage in the rough? How do they look in the morning without makeup?