

## **My Rules for Prospective Suitors**

### **Overview**

These are the stages of a relationship moving toward marriage:

1. *Friendship*—At this stage, the two of you only do things in groups. When you are with a group, there is to be no pairing off. No exclusivity. No communication of feelings. Such will be treated as severe violations of trust.
2. *Evaluation*—If the man wants to enter into a courtship with my daughter, he will ask permission from me to pursue my daughter. I will consult with her, and assuming she wishes to proceed, begin to evaluate the man according to the requirements for eligibility (see below). During this period I (or someone I trust) will become an accountability partner to him on all his devices (see requirements below). If he meets the requirements, and the daughter still wishes to proceed, they may enter into a courtship.
3. *Courtship*—During a courtship, the couple may get to know one another on a more exclusive and personal basis. It is important to note that a courtship is not a vow or a promise; it is not a betrothal. If either person wishes to break it off, that is fine. However, it is not something to be entered into unless there is serious intent on marriage.

During this period, the couple may go on “dates.” They may go to a restaurant together. They may have coffee together. Putter golf. Etc. The dates must all be in public—There is to be absolutely no parking in cars; no hanging out anywhere alone; etc. Other adults should always be nearby. A courtship should not last for a long period of time—The man should be aggressively preparing for marriage.

4. *Engagement*—If the couple wishes to proceed, they may secure permission to be engaged. During the engagement, the rules for dating are the same—no tempting situations. The engagement should be short—6 months or so.

5. *Marriage*

### **The Prohibitions Prior to Courtship**

It is my right and responsibility as father to govern my daughter’s vows (Numbers 30) and purity. There is to be no making of promises to one another without my consent. No commitments. No expressions of loyalty. No communication of affection. No exclusive dates until you are courting.

All sexual expressions are to be lawfully reserved for marriage. It’s true a kiss can be something shared between family as well as lovers—only a fool doesn’t know the difference between a sexual kiss and a familiar kiss. Sexual expressions include any activity that leads to greater and greater sexual arousal. It is like a flame, once ignited, that will not be quenched until it a sexual relationship is consummated. Because we are wired for this, the engagement period should not be long and the couple should be very wise to avoid temptation.

## **The Requirements for Eligibility**

A man who courts my daughter must be ready to marry my daughter. It is not enough that he intends to do these things, or verbally assents to them; they must be a clear trajectory toward, accomplished acts, or habits. The substance must be there. I will, moreover, be seeking out multiple testimonies to verify the truthfulness of your eligibility:

1. *He has the interest of my daughter.* There is no point in going further if you are not someone she is interested in. God be with you.
2. *He is near the time for getting married.* There is no point in doing anything right now if the young man is not within a year or two of getting married. It could be he is too young (16 or 17), or he is in a college program which will occupy his time for 3 or 4 years. What I would recommend to such a man is to prepare as well as he can, but he will have to wait until he is in range (1 or 2 years) to begin the process of evaluation (see 2 above).
3. *He walks with God in sincere faith.* He is disciplined in prayer and meditation on the Word of God. He should be a person of strong, reliable convictions shaped by the law of God. He is one who is actively putting his sin to death. His loyalty is to his Lord above his wife and children.

Because of the epidemic of pornography, I will require the young man to make me an accountability partner for all electronic devices he has access to. If he has electronic devices that access the web but cannot be overseen in this way, he will need to hand them over for this period, or get rid of them. If he is unwilling to do that, I will consider that a dealbreaker. I do not expect that any men living in this age have never been tempted or even overcome for a season by pornography. I do expect that any man marrying my daughter has self-control over the flesh, and has made all sin his mortal enemy.

4. *He respects God-ordained authority, especially his father and mother.* The way a man treats his father and mother is a reliable predictor of the spiritual health of his household and the spiritual future of his children and my grandchildren. The Lord was not exaggerating when he said honor leads to it “going well with you” and “living long in the land.”

5. *He pursues wisdom diligently.* This is through books and seeking counsel from older, wiser people. In his youth, he should be especially concerned with running a household, finances, work, controlling his anger and tongue, etc. Children *generally* do not rise above the culture of their parents. If your experience growing up was not one of actively pursuing wisdom, you need to amend this in your own generation.

6. *He attends and participates faithfully in church.* It should be an ethic in his house that he will always go to the required meetings of the church. He must be a churchman—one whom the leadership trusts as a reliable member. He would not move away without knowing there was a faithful church in the location he is moving to.

7. *He seeks responsibility as the only pathway to mature manhood.* Many fools seek money and treasure as the path to manhood. Some seek “masculine activity,” like exercise, manly hobbies, or dress. These things are fine to pursue, but not at the expense of responsibility. There are very many emotionally-backwards, irresponsible, unreliable men with large biceps and awesome toys. When a man is young, he should seek out many opportunities to serve. As he grows, the community will no doubt recognize his worth and place greater and greater weight on his back. Only in this way will he grow to be a strong, reliable man.

8. *He has a good prospect for provision.* He should make—or be far along on the path to making—a salary that will allow my daughter to stay home with young children. He should have a reasonable path to this, expecting children to come along quickly once married. In the greater Portland area, he should be on a path to making over \$100,000 a year. I want to see that he is saving, living on a budget, and working diligently at his vocation.

9. *He wants to have multiple children.* This means he is also thinking about how he will provide for them and educate them. He is absolutely committed to Christian education, whether it be homeschool, private school or a mix of both. He will also not consider any form of birth control that is an abortifacient.

10. *His conviction is that infants should be baptized and spiritually nurtured as members of the church.* To be clear, he should hold to pedobaptism and at least small child communion. Children were meant to be raised in the faith, not treated as aliens. The young man does not need to be a CREC member, but he should seek out a church that cares for his children.