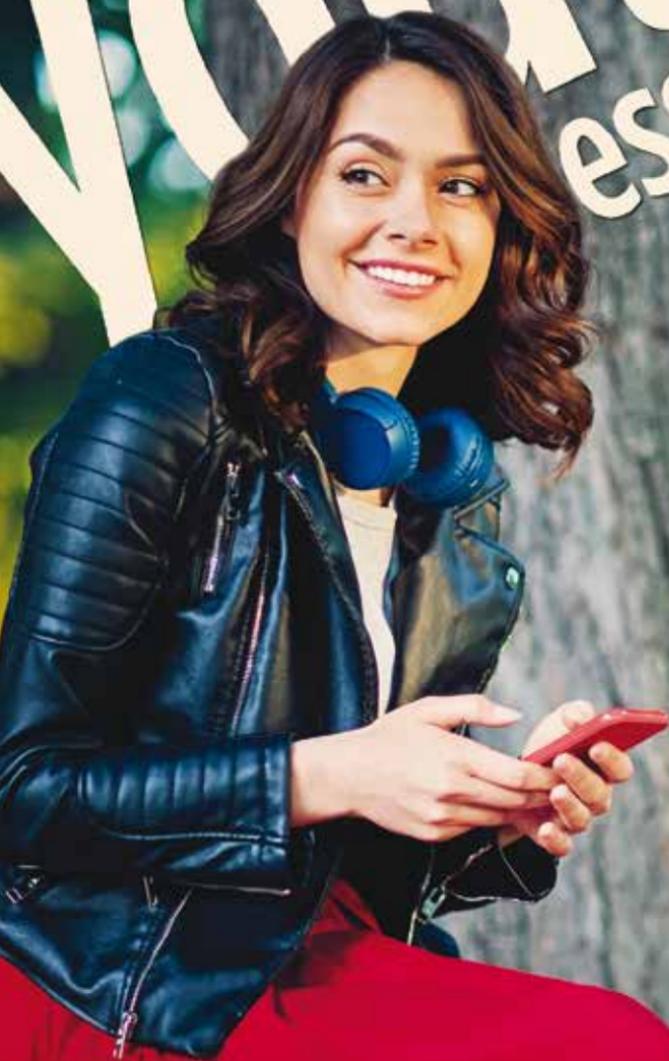


Youth messenger

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3



LET GOD *Time* YOUR LOVE STORY

p. 4



Are You Ready for Courtship?

In His Time



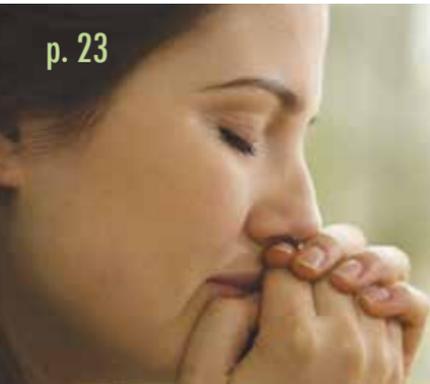
p. 13

Is it proper for the girl to be the first to show interest? p. 18

What is the best age range to get married? p. 29



p. 23



God's Timing Is Perfect

Our Creator is the Author of love and marriage. He created the first man and woman and performed the very first wedding. God designed us with a longing desire for relationships. Have you made Him the center of your life and relationships, or have you given Him a backseat?

If you're tired of shallow and cheap relationships that don't last and leave you emotionally drained, then there's good news for you. Your Creator, the Inventor of love, wishes to script a happy and lasting love story for you, but first, you must hand over to Him the pen of your life. He says to you, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26). When we give our heart and life over to God and keep His commandments, He will lead us to the right life mate.

Are you ready to let go of "your right" to make your own decisions about relationships? God has a vision for your relationship that will take your breath away. His plan of building a happy and lasting courtship and marriage is infinitely superior to the world's pattern. He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8, 9).

Maybe you're thinking, "Could God really find the right partner for me without my brilliant input?" Perhaps you've been worried, "What if I never meet the right girl or guy? And if I do meet them, how will I know that he/she is the one? What if I marry the wrong person and ruin my whole life?" God is asking you to hand over to Him all these fears. He says to you, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27).

This issue of the Youth Messenger is the first of three that deals with the topic of courtship and preparation for marriage. In this magazine,

- you will discover how to get ready for courtship
- you will learn when is the right time to begin courtship
- you will be amazed to learn how God led different couples as they waited for His timing.

You will also read thought-provoking, but honest questions that our young people from North America and Australia have asked about the subject. You will be educated and encouraged by the wise and practical answers given by our team of pastors. Happy reading! Happy learning! Happy courtship as you let God begin to write your love story!

—Liliane Balbach

A young man and woman are shown from the chest up, looking upwards with their hands raised in a gesture of hope or prayer. They are positioned at the bottom of the frame against a background of a cloudy sky. The man is on the left, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a white button-down shirt. The overall mood is optimistic and hopeful.

ARE YOU
READY

FOR COURTSHIP
AND MARRIAGE?

BY LILIANE BALBACH

“Haven’t you found Mr. Right yet?” or “She is going college to get her M.R.S. degree.” If you’re a young lady, you have probably heard remarks like these. Single young men may hear comments such as: “Are you dating yet?” It seems that our society views singleness as a disease that must be cured. However, when viewed from God’s perspective, singleness is an important season in life that can bring many blessings and opportunities. The Lord says, “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Some of the most productive years of our life can be when we are single: times when we set out life goals and fulfill them, and when we use our time wisely to learn, to grow in every area of our life. Let’s look at two young people to learn how they’ve spent their single years: Christopher is a 30-year old single Christian young man who has been obsessed with trying to find the right girl to date and marry but without success. In the meantime, he has almost put his life on hold until he finds the girl of his dreams. He has completed only 2 years of his college education, is still going to school, working at a second-rate job, and unsure of his life calling. He’s been praying that God sends him a girl as soon as possible. In his heart, he’s been bitter, resentful and full of self-pity.

On the contrary, Emily, a senior in college, is constantly being asked, “So, are you dating anyone?” She isn’t thrilled to hear that question over again and over again. She says, “It’s strange. People don’t realize there’s so much more to my life than being in a relationship. I am a busy college student. I have a strong relationship with my Lord. I have a ministry in teaching needy children, and I enjoy going on yearly mission trips. No one ever asks me about these areas of my life. When others focus so much on relationships, it’s easy to begin thinking that you need a relationship to be completed as a person. But that is far from the truth. I am complete right now. My life is filled with many rich spiritual experiences and opportunities. I am happy in this season of singleness.” Young ladies and young men, who would make a better marriage partner—Christopher or Emily?

During her years of singleness, Emily had times of loneliness, but she didn’t have self-pity. Instead, she focused on acquiring good domestic skills, finishing her education, and preparing for her career. She is learning to live on a budget, improve her health and strengthen her relationship with Jesus Christ while trusting Him to provide a future husband in His time.

One of my favorite verses is Psalm 37:4, 5. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.” When I was in high school, I believed the Lord would provide for me a fine Christian young man if I did all the right things, prayed, read my Bible

and went to church. But, one day as I was meditating on these verses, I realized that unless I make Jesus the center and delight of my life in everything, He couldn't fulfill the desires of my heart. The truth is that the only way to experience a God-written love story is to love Jesus Christ with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. He wants to train us to delight in Him completely and to find our greatest satisfaction in Him alone. Often God will wait to bring the best companion into our lives until we have truly given Him the first and best place in our heart.

OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SINGLE SEASON

What should a young man or young lady be doing as he/she is praying and waiting for the right life partner? First and foremost, the season of singleness is a "time to plant," and marriage is the time to "pluck up that which is planted" (Ecclesiastes 3:2). During our single years, we are "planting" an education, a career, a strong relationship with Christ, domestic and other life skills needed for life. It's time to use the wonderful opportunities to learn, to improve, and to grow into a well-rounded person before marriage. The more one is able to experience these opportunities, the more successful and peaceful their married life will be.

A. Academic pursuits

Life during your singlehood is the best time to get your college or trade school education completed. It is the time to get that internship finished so you can find a good job with which to support a family. If you are planning to get a master's degree and/or other advanced degrees, it is best to have them completed before you get married.

My husband and I had gotten married after completing only half of our college education. We both took full-time jobs with the General Conference and were going to school in the evenings. It took us several years longer to complete our degrees and it was a very demanding period in our lives. It is best to finish your education before marriage.

This is also an excellent time for you to attend missionary school. This type of training will equip you to be actively involved in your local church, and in reaching people at your job for Christ.



B. Spiritual Health

This is the best time to develop a solid relationship with Jesus Christ. Establish regular daily devotions. Study your Bible and read as many of the Spirit of Prophecy books as you can. The “Conflict of the Ages” series, *The Ministry of Healing*, *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts on the Mount of Blessings*, *The Adventist Home*, *Education*, and others. Develop a strong prayer life and learn to intercede for others.



C. Domestic skills

I remember several years after my husband and I were married, as a young bride, I was learning the art of entertaining. To me, it was not a problem to have one family over for a meal if we invited them ahead of time and I was prepared. My husband, however, came from a family where they often had 15-20 people come to their home for lunch after church. To me, that was such an overwhelming thought. Although he didn't push that idea on me, he occasionally wanted to invite people to our home at a moment's notice. A few years later, when he was pastoring a church, we had many visitors in attendance. On Sabbaths, when there was no fellowship lunch, he'd want us to invite all the visitors to our home for lunch. I would be very anxious about that and would tell him that we couldn't invite them all because we didn't have enough food and I had not made any special dishes for guests.

Then he told me something that forever changed my idea about entertaining guests. He said, “Love, don't worry. Let's just open some cans of beans, make a big salad and share whatever else we have in the fridge. These people don't care about our special dishes, what they really need is our love and our fellowship.” From that moment on, my blind eyes were opened and never again was I afraid to invite people to our home for a meal. I wouldn't serve my guests canned beans, but rather I would cook one or two simple dishes in large quantities. My husband would make a large salad, and he'd invite the guests to help him. Everyone had a part in the preparation, and everyone was happy. After lunch, we took them for a “digestive walk” in nature. When our guests left, they were so grateful and happy; we had a lingering joy and peace for we had also “entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2).

Learning the skill of entertaining guests is important, however along with that, be sure you learn how to share hospitality with others. Open your heart, your home, and your dining room to people that they may see God's love through you.

YOUNG LADIES

Here are the skills that every young lady needs to master in preparation for courtship and marriage:

YES NO

- Do you know how to plan a healthy nutritious menu, and to cook tasty vegetarian meals?
- Are you familiar and comfortable with entertaining guests and being hospitable?
- Do you know how to shop for the best bargains for food and other items for the home?
- Do you know how to plant and care for a garden?

If the answer is “no” to questions 1 and 2, it would be good for you to spend some time with an experienced cook, then practice until you become one. You may even want to take a nutrition class in college. Notice the counsel from Inspiration:

“Our sisters often do not know how to cook. To such I would say, I would go to the very best cook that could be found in the country, and remain there if necessary for weeks until I had become a mistress of the art—an intelligent, skillful cook. I would pursue this course if I were forty years old. It is your duty to know how to cook.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 372.

YOUNG MEN

Although young men may not be cooking much when they are married, they also need to know how to make a few basic dishes. These days with both spouses working, it is important that men also know this important life skill.

YES NO

- Do you know how to cook a few simple dishes and prepare healthy salads?
- Do you know how to fix some basic things around the house?
- Do you know how to take care of the lawn and yard?
- Do you know how to prepare the soil for a garden?
- Do you know how to plant and prune fruit trees?
- Do you know how to do an oil change and some basic automotive repairs?





D. Housekeeping skills

When I was twelve years old my dad, a fine European designer and tailor, gave me a useful lesson that has been very helpful. On that memorable day, Dad had said, “Today, I’m going to teach you how to iron a man’s shirt.” I thought, “That’s common sense.” However, Dad gave me detailed instructions on how to do this task step-by-step and explained why it is done that way. After a 20-minute lesson, it was my turn to iron a shirt while he critiqued me. I have given the same ironing lesson to my sons. When I see someone with a poorly ironed shirt, I remember Dad and am thankful that he taught me perfection in ironing. It doesn’t matter if you are wearing an old shirt, pants or skirt or an expensive new shirt, always iron it perfectly, and you will look your best.

YES NO

- Are you keeping your present room/home clean and orderly?
- Do you know how to thoroughly clean inside the house—bathrooms, kitchen, bedroom—how to vacuum and dust properly?
- Do you know how to iron well, especially men’s shirts and pants?
- Do you know how to do simple sewing like putting on a button, hemming a skirt or a pair of pants?



E. Finances

YES NO

- [] [] How are you handling your finances? Do you have a budget? If not, ask one of your parents to help you set one up.
- [] [] Do you know how to live within your budget? If not, what is preventing you from living within your budget? How can you change that? _____

- [] [] Are you out of debt? Have you paid off your student loans?
- [] [] If you use credit cards, are you paying them off each month and avoiding debt like the “plague”?



F. Physical health

It is important for both the young lady and young man to be in good health before marriage. “The parties may not have worldly wealth, but they should have the far greater blessing of health.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 358. Remaining single should be strongly considered by anyone with a life-threatening and debilitating physical or mental problem.

Evaluate your physical health. Are you physically healthy? Are you obeying all the 8 laws of health? Do you have energy and vitality to perform your daily duties without much effort?



YES NO

- [] [] Are you eating healthy meals and eating them on time? If not, what do you need to improve on? _____
- [] [] Are you snacking between meals? If so, how will you quit this habit? _____
- [] [] Are you engaging in regular exercise 5 or more days per week for 30+ minutes?
- [] [] Are you doing some type of practical outdoor exercise like gardening or yard care? If not, how do you plan to incorporate that into your life? _____
- [] [] Are you drinking a least 8–10 glasses of water per day?
- [] [] Have you eliminated sodas, energy drinks, and other sugar-and-caffeine-loaded beverages from your diet? If not, how do you plan to do it with God's help? _____
- [] [] Are you spending daily time outdoors in the sunshine and the fresh air?
- [] [] Are you practicing self-control in your eating, drinking, sleeping, working, social media and recreation? If not, how will you improve this with God's help? _____
- [] [] Do you get adequate sleep? Do you have regular bedtime and wake-up times? If not, how will you improve this area of your life? _____

G. Traveling

The single years are great for going on mission trips, helping others who are in need, learning about other cultures, and realizing that we are all part of the family of God.

Our Lord loves excellence! This is why He promises to help us improve every area of our lives. He says, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).



“GOD, I’M LONELY”

Sometimes when you look around and see young couples around you, you may wonder, “Why isn’t that me?” Or “Is that ever going to be me?” God knows our need for companionship and had created us for relationships. (Genesis 2:18.) Now is the time to learn to trust God in your season of singleness, then you will continue to trust Him during your married life.

It’s interesting that some of God’s most successful heroes were single—Daniel, his three friends, and Jesus Christ. Elisabeth Elliot stated, “Loneliness is a required course for leadership.” God may be preparing you to be a leader for Him in the church and in the world. Moses was trained for leadership during his lonely 40 years in the desert. Paul was trained for three years in Arabia, and Elijah was trained for over three years during the drought.

CONTENTMENT

The Bible teaches us to be content during all the seasons of life including our single years. He

says, “and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

To be happily married, we first must learn to be happily single. If we are unhappy and bitter while we’re single, we can’t expect that suddenly during our courtship and marriage we will be a positive person. It will never happen. Today is the time to learn to be cheerful and content as a single person, to be faithful and patient, and to wait on God, one day, one year at a time.

ENJOY THE BLESSINGS

Consider the great benefits of your current singleness. Be the man or woman that God wants you to be, then wait on Him to provide the answer to your prayers. But don’t look down on singleness as if it’s a second-class life—it is not. In 1 Corinthians 7 we learn that whether we are single or married, we are to glorify God to the fullest in the season we are in.

Never believe the lies of the enemy who may be saying, “You are not in a relationship because you are not pretty enough or smart enough, not handsome or good enough.” Always remember that “you are fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). God, the Master Designer of the universe, looks at you and sees you as His priceless masterpiece. You are worth more than silver, gold or diamonds for you have been purchased with the precious blood of His Son Jesus Christ. 



In His Time

BY BILJANA AND JOSIP ZIC



My wife and I were both blessed to have grown up in Christian homes, with parents that loved each other and their children very much. They taught us the importance of family and how our relationship with God influences our relationships and success as a family. Our parents were very actively involved in the church, and so demonstrated, to us children, the importance of church attendance and participation. As a family, we were often the first ones to arrive at church and the last ones to leave. The example of our parents led both of us to want to marry someone who would not only fill our lives with joy and love, but who was also a committed Christian and who would help us grow in our faith and in our respective journey with Christ.

We were blessed to find each other at a relatively young age at the point at which we started to transition into adulthood. From the beginning of our friendship, I knew that I wanted to marry her. She was everything that I had imagined in a wife. She was intelligent, faithful, caring, and beautiful, both inside and out. I could already hear the wedding bells ringing, but there were some obstacles that I had to first overcome. The main impediment was that I was 18 years of age, and not at a level of maturity or independence to get married.

WAITING IS IMPORTANT

Ellen White wrote to a young man named John: “I am sorry that you have entangled yourself in any courtship with Elizabeth. In the first place, your anxiety upon this

question is premature. . . . Wait till you have some just knowledge of yourself and of the world . . . before you let the subject of marriage possess your thoughts.”—*Letters to Young Lovers*, p. 36.

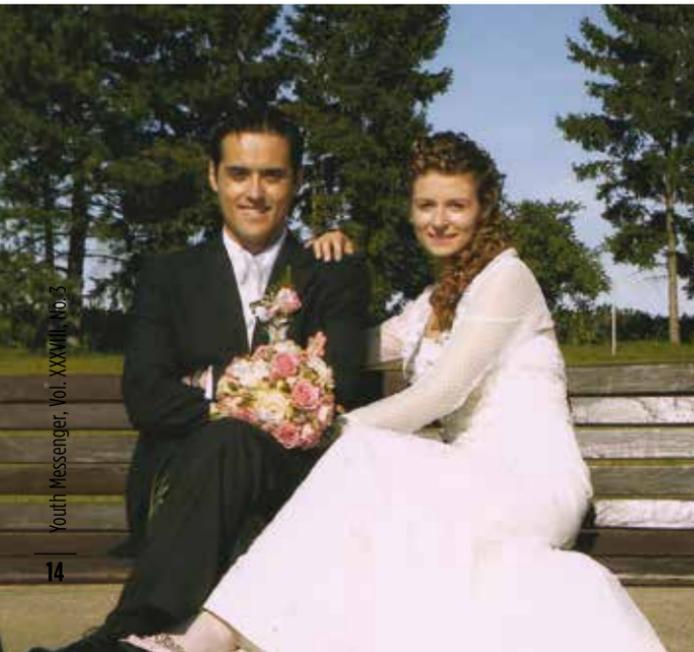
The reality was, that like John, I didn’t even know myself well enough to know the difference between infatuation and love. It was a difficult lesson to learn at that time but waiting for sufficient age and experience was important for both of us and for our relationship. One of the problems with premature courtships is that there’s an increased risk of an unhappy marriage. This is why inspiration gives us the following advice:

“The young affections should be restrained until the period arrives when sufficient age and experience will make it honorable and safe to unfetter them.”—*A Solemn Appeal*, p. 52.

So, what is the reason for restraining our youthful affections? “Those who will not be restrained will be in danger of dragging out not just an unhappy marriage, but an unhappy existence.”—*Ibid*. So, to be happily married, we need to take into account that we need to have both age and experience.

When we were younger, neither of us thought that we would marry someone from a different continent. We were established in the areas where we had grown and were completing post-secondary education in our fields of interest. We had families, friends, and churches that we loved. During our courtship, the distance between us ended up being both a blessing and a challenge. There is a saying that distance makes the heart grow fonder. It is hard to be apart from someone you love, but as young adults, we needed more life

experience and maturity, so the distance ended up being a blessing to both of us. The time apart allowed us to focus on our faith, our personal development, education, and other important things that would be beneficial for our future together.



We were also blessed with the support of our families, and we turned to them for guidance as God counsels us to do:

“Take God and your God-fearing parents into your counsel, young friends. Pray over the matter. Weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny. The step you are about to take is one of the most important in your life, and should not be taken hastily. While you may love, do not love blindly.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 449.

Being parents of two wonderful little boys now, we can better understand that at the time there was no one on this earth that loved us more than did our parents. They raised us, invested time in us, cared for us, and developed us into the young adults that we were. They wanted only the best for us. Their blessing and support were essential in our courtship and even more so in our marriage today.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

After reading the counsel below, it was clear to me that if I wanted to be a husband, I needed to look at myself through her eyes. What was she looking for in a husband and how did I compare?

“Before giving her hand in marriage, every woman should inquire whether he with whom she is about to unite her destiny is worthy. What has been his past

I hate to admit it, but if she was here while I was in university, I am not sure that I would have done as well as I did in my studies.

record? Is his life pure? Is the love which he expresses of a noble, elevated character, or is it a mere emotional fondness? Has he the traits of character that will make her happy? Can she find true peace and joy in his affection? Will she be allowed to preserve her individuality?”—*Ibid.*, p. 439.

When I looked in the mirror, it was clear that I was not ready for marriage. I needed to finish school, find employment, and have a strong relationship with the Lord. At 18 years of age, I could not provide this amazing woman with an atmosphere where we could find joy, happiness, and faith.

COMPLETING MY EDUCATION

I was blessed enough to get into a good university, close to my home, and to have the support of my parents to choose any career that I wished. I was just starting university at the time that we began our courtship and she happened to be here during my first month of classes. Unfortunately, I didn't spend as much time on my studies as I should have, during that first month, and I could see why

How would I finance my marriage? How would I provide her with the kind of life that I would like to have together?

counsel is given that we need to be careful about mixing our education and courtship.

“Under (i) the debasing power of sensual indulgence, or (ii) the untimely excitement of courtship and marriage, many students fail to reach that height of mental development which they might otherwise have attained.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 88. [Roman numerals supplied.]

I hate to admit it, but if she was here while I was in university, I am not sure that I would have done as well as I did in my studies. This distance between us was difficult, but it gave us both the opportunity to focus on our studies, when we were apart and to successfully complete our degrees. Interestingly enough, it was at this time when we got to know each other the best. Being physically separated by the Atlantic Ocean, we spent a lot of time communicating through telephone and e-mails. It was during this period that I knew that I would enjoy her company as much then, as I would when we were both old and grey. I could picture the two of us sitting on a porch somewhere, still making

each other laugh and cherishing our time together.

As part of my studies, I was required to complete two 8-month work terms. During one of these terms, I had to move away from home and see what it was like to live on my own. As it says in Proverbs 22:7, “The borrower is servant to the lender.” Up to that point, my parents were the ones supporting me and I was under their care.

During my work term I had the opportunity to see if I could financially support a family. It was here that I realized what it takes to pay the bills and put food on the table, even for just one person. How would I finance my marriage? How would I provide her with the kind of life that I would like us to have together? Love is an integral part of a marriage, but the reality is that many marriages are strained and even broken due to financial strains. The Lord blessed me, and after that work term, the company that I worked for offered me a well-paid position, starting right after graduation. I was finally in a position where I could financially provide for a family.

We are all at different points on our Christian journey, but it was wonderful to find a young woman who would travel on that journey with me. We could pray together and support each other’s spiritual health. This is the key ingredient to a successful marriage.

“Religion is needed in the home. Only this can prevent the

grievous wrongs which so often embitter married life. Only where Christ reigns, can there be deep, true, unselfish love.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 440.

We both recognize that neither of us is perfect. We have our defects and make mistakes, and sometimes even hurt the one that we love so much. But, because we are united in our love for Jesus and in our faith, we can overcome, we can forgive, and we can support each other. In our experience, this has been the key in helping us through any difficulties that have arisen, both in our courtship and in our marriage.

For those that are still looking for a significant other, remember the words of David: “Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” (Psalm 27:14).

I don’t believe that there is a formula for the right time to get married, but I do believe that God has a plan for each one of us. We need to ensure that we are not rushing into a relationship because we think that it is our time to get married. Inspiration tells us that a person in his/her teens doesn’t have the maturity to evaluate who should be his/her life companion. “A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness

of a person, as young as himself, to be his companion for life.”—*A Solemn Appeal*, p. 53.

We both had prayed that God would help us open our eyes to find the right person to share our lives with and bring us closer to Him. Our counsel to those that are still looking for a life partner is: 1) turn to the Lord for guidance, 2) ask input of your parents and those of experience around you, and 3) ensure that you are independent and mature enough to be the husband or wife that can be part of a family that will be blessing on this earth and the New Earth to come.

Solomon said, “To every thing, there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. . . . A time to love, and a time to hate” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 8). We will be successful and experience a special satisfaction and beauty when we follow God’s timing in our courtship for “He hath made every thing beautiful in his time” (v. 11). Are you willing to wait for His time as the words of this song remind us? 🎵

*In his time, in his time
He makes all things beautiful
In his time
Lord, please show me every day
As you’re teaching me your way
That you do just what you say
In your time*

QUESTIONS ON COURTSHIP

BY PASTOR RADU IONITA

1 IS IT PROPER/APPROPRIATE FOR THE GIRL TO BE THE FIRST TO SHOW INTEREST AND TRY TO STRIKE UP A FRIENDSHIP WITH A YOUNG MAN?

“The Bible plainly states that the husband is the head of the family.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 115. If the man is to lead in the family, then he should be the initiator in the courtship as well. In the majority of the world’s cultures, this is the case. The man has to take the risk and assume the responsibility. He has to strive for what he values, and that is not an easy task. Young ladies, please make sure that you don’t complicate his task more than this!

On the other hand, for the husband to be the head of the family, does not mean that the wife is not his best counselor. In God’s plan, she should be “an help

meet [suitable] for him” (Genesis 2:18). I have a question for you young ladies: Why should you not be a little helpful to the young man in the process of initiating a relationship? There are some young men, who have a wonderful character, but who are introverted or shy, and they may have difficulty in starting a relationship. Some others may be a bit proud and may be afraid of rejection. These types of young men may never take the first step, which appears difficult for them! Why not help them a little bit? To be of help does not mean to become “the head”! Let him be the head! Young ladies, you don’t have to take the first step; you may only lay the ground for the young man to take that first step!

So, you had prayed and had carefully evaluated the



character of the young man you like. You have observed how he behaves in group settings, and have appreciated his faithfulness, his nobility, his altruism, and his manners. Certainly, you are attracted toward such a converted son of God. Then, the same Lord that had put him on your heart, is putting you on his heart! At this point, it is sufficient for you to give him a signal that he is important to you, that you appreciate, and care for him. Be discreet. Keep your modesty. Let him believe that he “is the initiator,” and that he is making the first step! (Yeah, and at some time after the wedding, you may show him your daily journal, just to add fun to your happy marriage!)

I remember a young God-fearing young man, who after years of prayer and after observing and being observed by many young ladies, who was still not clear about a future spouse. One day, he updated his Facebook status to “having a cold.” A girl that was patiently dreaming of being his loving wife someday, wrote to him with some suggested remedies. Time passed, and one day he was thinking of all the people he knew and who truly cared about him. Suddenly, the above girl came into his mind. He prayed and took the first step. He called the young lady! Long story short . . . they are now happily married and expecting a child. The question arises, who took the first step? The young man believed he did!



The danger is in being overly forward with one’s intentions. We may do this out of fear of losing our “once-in-a-lifetime” chance while in reality, it really means we have a lack of faith. If a girl is too bold with young men, instead of noticing her, they will avoid her.

“There are so many forward misses and bold, forward women who have a faculty of insinuating themselves into notice, putting themselves in the company of young men, courting the attentions, inviting flirtations from married or unmarried men.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 333. The above statement describes how a Christian young lady is not to act! A Christian gentleman will avoid such a girl, knowing that she is not a pure and true child of God.

Therefore, trust in the Lord and be levelheaded. Be nice yet reserved. You are a daughter of the King! “And we know that all things [will] work together for good” (Romans 8:28) for you! Act then, according to His grace!

2 WHAT ARE SOME GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT LIFE PARTNER? WHAT THINGS SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

You cannot marry someone to whom you are not attracted and whom you cannot love and respect. (*Adventist Home*, p. 48.) “I charge you . . . that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please” (Song of Solomon 2:7). Better get ready for a great relationship by first becoming a great person yourself!

Accept or choose someone who is a child of God, and who has a genuine experience with Him. Look among God’s people, not among His enemies. Look not only for a young person who is “a member of the church,” but for one who is a friend of Jesus! “Only where Christ reigns, can there be deep, true, unselfish love.” On the other hand, “to connect with an unbeliever is to place yourself on Satan’s ground. You grieve the Spirit of God and forfeit His protection. Can you afford to have such terrible odds against you in fighting the battle for everlasting life?”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 440, 441.

It’s very important that you evaluate his/her character. Being attracted to him/her is not enough. The question is, who is that person? What is his/her character like? Which are the principles governing his/her life? Is altruism, flexibility, order, integrity, diligence predominant in their

life? On the contrary, is he/she superficial, selfish, worldly, or lazy?

Pray four times a day!

“If men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray **four times a day** when such a step is anticipated.”—*Ibid.*, p. 460. [Emphasis added.]

Generally, when you love someone, your heart is very emotional, and you are in danger of not using your reason. You need help from the Lord to govern your emotions and to reason wisely. When you pray about your loved one, do you feel peace, or are you unsure and fearful? Being at peace with God while praying is a sign to continue the relationship; but being uncomfortable and uneasy, is a warning. Then open your heart to God, and sincerely ask Him to evaluate the person for you.

Counsel with your God-fearing parents!

“If you are blessed with God-fearing parents, seek counsel of them.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 359. “When perplexed to know what course is right, let them [the children] lay the matter just as they view it before their parents, and ask advice of them. Who are so well calculated to point out their dangers as godly parents? Who can understand their peculiar temperaments so well as they?”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 106.



3 WHAT ARE THE PROPER FIRST STEPS TO TAKE FOR A GUY WHO LIKES A GIRL? IN WHAT ORDER SHOULD HE MAKE HIS FEELINGS KNOWN TO HER, THE PARENTS, AND THE PASTOR?

The good news is that for a true child of God, the issue is not so complicated as it may appear!

Step 1: Come closer to God.

If this tiny plant named “love,” arising in your heart is from Him, He will make it clear for you. Before taking any other steps, clarify things in your mind and your heart. Prayerfully observe the character of the girl. Are her major traits of character in harmony with your aspirations and tastes? Will you be ennobled and enriched to have such a person next to you for the rest of your life? Would you like your children to inherit her personality and traits of character?

Step 2: If you feel comfortable with the answers to the above questions, then . . . approach the girl!

Tell her sincerely that you highly appreciate her. . . . That it would be an honor to be accepted of her and to know her better. Don't hurry her to give you an answer! Make sure that you understand exactly what she means. If she seems evasive, it could be that she is surprised, not necessarily rejecting you. If she says: “Hmm, that's interesting,” you may say, “Is this a kind of yes?” Smile, be respectful, and confident! If the answer is “no,” be polite. You may reaffirm your appreciation, in spite of the refusal, and make sure you leave the door open for her to reconsider in the future. Let God and time do their part. If she agrees, you may go to the next step.

Step 3: See her father.

This may seem to be tough, but it is not at all. The father of the girl will love and respect you seeing you're a responsible MAN. Be respectful to him. Express your appreciation for his daughter, and your positive intention to know her better. Promise him that you will respect her, and that you'll make sure she will not suffer any harm. Then keep your promises! This is a very important step, in the sight of God, which can't be overlooked. (See *Messages to Young People*, p. 446; *The Adventist Home*, p. 57.)

Step 4: Continue to speak with your God-fearing parents!

Lay down before them your dreams and intentions. (See *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 359.) They love you more than any other human being, and they know you better than anyone else. Counsel with them. Learn from their experience. Pray together. You are gaining so much by thus doing! Never indulge in your mind the thought to marry against their will. (See *The Adventist Home*, p. 75.) If they have objections, listen carefully. Ask them to explain. Postpone any further step. If you have to change or improve some things, do it. Continue your endeavor only after they have withdrawn any possible objection.

Step 5: Counsel with your pastor or with a pastor of your confidence, who knows the girl. Ask his opinion and advice. Don't be afraid to hear his objections and concerns. They are for your good. Consider them with much prayer. Try to see the whole picture through the eyes of these people of experience.

Step 6: Avoid any haste.

God is eternal; only Satan is in a continuous hurry! If you have concerns on the way, slow down the run. You don't have to quit; only slow down. Take time to analyze the concerns, and to solve them, if possible. Continue to pray, so that the Lord may have free access to her and your heart. Give time to your heart to get ready for the extraordinary adventure of married life! (See *The Adventist Home*, p. 44; *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 368.)

A photograph of a bride and groom smiling in a field of white flowers. The groom is wearing a blue suit and a white boutonniere, and the bride is wearing a white lace dress. The background is a soft-focus field of white flowers under a bright sky.

GOD'S TIMING IS PERFECT

BY MARTA BALBACH

Have you ever felt that you wanted to be loved by someone else besides your family? Just like every other human being, I also found myself having this desire to be loved or at least noticed by someone else besides my parents and siblings. I believe we all experience this need at different stages of our life.

I was raised in a loving and protective family, and I had strong morals at a young age. Since I wasn't raised in the church, my early years went by without me knowing anything about God. When I was ten years old, I attended church for the first time and participated in a

youth program. My whole world changed that day; I felt that I had found my happy place—a place where I could belong. Actually, I didn't care to attend school events, or parties and amusements. I didn't hang out with friends because, besides school, we had no common interests. I continued to attend church first with my dad, and later my little sister joined us also. When I was sixteen years old, I gave my heart to the Lord and was baptized. That was the first time that my mom and my little brother came to church. I praise God that Mom never stopped attending church after that day!

HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

When I studied the “Principles of Faith” with the pastor, I learned that church members could only marry someone within the church. I was so happy; I felt assured that I wouldn’t have to worry about finding a life partner. I felt guaranteed that I would be easily married. Soon after, however, I had to realize that it would not be as simple as I thought. Just because young people attended the same church, it didn’t mean that they would mutually like each other. My life was fluctuating between happy and unhappy times, between great hopes and even greater disappointments. Nevertheless, for many years, I never thought that I should look for “love” outside the church.

Although Satan can read our emotions and actions as an open book, I thank our dear God that the enemy has limited his power so that he can’t read our thoughts. However, he knows how we feel and what we are going through, so he starts to put thoughts, questions and doubts in our mind about our situation and struggles. One day I had a circumstance in my life, which although beyond my control, had a negative impact on me. As a result, the enemy led me to conclude that I would never find a spouse in the church.

WHISPERINGS OF THE ENEMY

Little by little Satan worked on my mind and soul. Although I was not compromising any of

our principles of faith, the enemy was whispering to me: “Just be open-minded. You just never know, you may find a young man in the world and convert him to the truth. Look at your mom. She’s from the world and now she’s attending church.” I kind of liked the idea, but I still stayed faithful to my beliefs. In the meantime, I started setting certain standards in my mind about the “future young man” I would meet in the world. I could write a book about the experiences I went through during those years of “double-mindedness,” but I can tell you I definitely wasn’t happy. During my twenties, I wasn’t dating, and I was very discouraged. I was losing my connection with the Lord. I still believed in Him and I did not disagree with any of our beliefs, but I was disappointed with the church and I didn’t want to fellowship anymore. I wanted to resign from church membership. But praise God, the pastor told me, “Think a little more about it. We don’t make these types of decisions based on feelings. If you are doing anything in your life that is against the principles of faith, let me know. In that case, we’ll have to accept your resignation; otherwise we’ll keep you as a member.” I was very upset. I believe I even asked him, “So you are telling me that if I want to resign from church membership, I’ll have to do something deserving of being disfellowshipped?” Of course, now

I know that's not what he meant, but at the time that's how I felt because I was full of bitterness.

EYE-OPENING FRIENDSHIPS

While I was in technical school, I had an astounding experience. It showed me how amazingly God takes care of us as long as we don't reject Him in our hearts or completely turn our backs on Him. In my class, there was a young man that I started liking. He was smarter than the average guys his age, and we became good friends. Weeks and months passed, and we both felt that our classmates began noticing there was probably something more between us than just friendship. So, I asked him in an email what he thought about our relationship. He responded, "Let us meet at the bus station and we'll talk about it." So, we met that afternoon and he started talking.

I could not believe what my atheist friend said to me. "Look, I like you. I really do. I am sure we could have a relationship if you were an average girl. But I see that your faith and principles are very important to you, and I think it is something that will never really change. I don't think that I can take on this challenge, and I think you would not be happy either. So, I would suggest that we just remain friends." At that moment, I felt I was going to die right there. I was so disappointed and no less ashamed. I thought to myself, "What? This guy, who's an atheist,

points out to me how important my faith is, and brings it up as an obstacle to our relationship?" I was shocked!

After being disappointed several times, I started building an invisible wall around me and tried to protect myself from more bitterness. I had a similar incident happen to me a few years later when I met an influential young man I had known before. He was well-known in my town and had a high social status. I thought that I would never have a chance with him since he could have had any young lady he wanted. So, when he invited me out for dinner one day, I was very excited and hopeful. After that date, he never contacted me again. A few weeks later, I sent him a text message, and asked him why he completely disappeared. He gave a similar answer as the atheist young man did.



So, I realized I just could not help being myself. I never acted or played games with anyone, and since I still believed in God, my faith was very important to me. Even though I didn't say a word about it, I could not hide it. For this reason, these young men did not want to date me.

MY SISTER'S COURTSHIP

I hit emotional rock-bottom when my 10-year-younger sister started dating a young man from church. I thought, "What would people think if my little sister gets married before me?" Definitely, everyone would think that something was wrong with me, and my chances for marriage would be over. That was a very difficult time for me, and Satan worked very hard to completely destroy me.

Instead of being happy for my dear sister's courtship, I was upset. I felt this was the most humiliating situation for me. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Little did I know, at the time, that God was already preparing a young man for me. It was taking a little longer and I needed to be patient. That's why God was leading me in different paths to save me for him!

Months passed in this emotional crisis, and I could see the sadness of my parents and siblings as they watched me suffer, without the ability to help. They

were praying for me and trying to reason with me. I knew that it was not my sister's fault that I didn't have a boyfriend, but I just couldn't help feeling so terrible.

I SAW MYSELF

Actually, I could see myself as if I was observing from the outside, and it scared me. I could not recognize the person I had become. I felt I was completely under the influence of another power. I later realized that "it is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

GETTING OUT OF THE HORRIBLE PIT

I felt like Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24.) I praise the Lord that He allowed me to see myself like that. I believe that's how He answered the many prayers of my family. At first, I had no strength to change my wrong way of thinking. My relationship with the Lord wasn't the best at this time; no wonder I had no strength. I had cut myself off from the only Source of strength against the evil one.



I felt I really needed to do something, and that's when I first “cried to the Lord” for help. I asked Him to give me the power to pray again with real faith, and to help me overcome the feelings of bitterness and despondency.

Don't get me wrong, I did not hate my sister—I wanted only the best for her. I just detested the situation I was in and questioned, “Why? Why does it have to be this way?” These feelings were destroying me, and I could not hide this. I thank the Lord for His mercy and patience with me. Soon after, I started praying earnestly again. I begged the Lord to help me overcome my negative thoughts and feelings. I pleaded with Him to calm me down to accept whatever He had in store for me. I asked Him something that wasn't easy for me: “Lord, if it's your will for me to remain single, help me to accept it.” At this time, I was 31 years old.

Little by little it became easier for me to pray this prayer. The terrible burden was suddenly disappearing. Soon I caught myself planning my sister's engagement party! I worked on arranging the food and decorations with my whole heart. By the time the party came around, I had no bad feelings and was truly happy for my sister and her fiancé. Wasn't it a miracle, dear young friends? I'm telling you, it was a miracle from God because I know how deep I was sinking in that emotional mud. It seemed impossible to get out. But thank God, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings” (Psalm 40:2).

I SURRENDERED MY LIFE

I made a true and heartfelt commitment to the Lord: I would stay in the faith whatever plans He had in mind for me—even if that

People

See All



Daniel Balbach

SDARM

Bible Worker at SDARM
Studied at Crafton Hills College

 Add Friend 

 104 mutual friends

meant remaining single. At that moment I felt such great peace—do you know why? The Bible says, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3). I had finally surrendered my life to Christ again, and had given Him the permission to decide if I should remain single or get married. Now, I didn’t have to worry about it anymore. Christ would take care of this important area of my life. Finally, I had His peace in my heart which turned my life back to normal again.

When we “play with the devil” we don’t have any peace, but “great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). When we surrender our life to the Lord, the first and biggest change that we experience is peace! That burden of sin and resentment falls off.

The miracles of God didn’t stop here. Just a few months after I made that commitment to the Lord, I received a friend request on Facebook from a young man who lived on the other side of

the world. I had casually met his parents and brothers a few years before, but I never met him. Since I was not thinking about finding a husband outside of my country, this was quite a surprise to me. Yet still, I could not stop thinking that was so unique that he contacted me. We started communicating with each other, and he came to visit me a few times. Twenty months after that first message, we were married. Today, we both feel truly happy and blessed by how the Lord wrote our love story.

So, dear young friends, never give up on the Lord. He does not want you to be unhappy or discouraged just because you can’t find a life partner at the time you wish. God wants the best for us, so let Him write your love story with the person He has in mind for you. Pray, surrender your life to Him, then wait patiently for His timing!

“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). 🍎

A hand holding a glowing question mark surrounded by other question marks.

Your Courtship Questions Answered

BY PASTOR JOHN BAER

1. WHAT IS THE BEST AGE RANGE TO GET MARRIED?

Psychology Today, June 1, 2016, states that “statistical trends do suggest that it’s best to wait a few years. Divorce is 50% less likely for someone who is 25 years old when they wed as compared to someone who gets married at age 20.” It is best to get married when neurological, social, psychological, emotional and physical development is complete to handle all the responsibilities of married life.

In a letter to dear John, dated June 8, 1880, Ellen White writes: “I speak to you as one who knows. Wait till you have some just knowledge of yourself and of the world, of the bearing and character of young women, before you let the subject of marriage possess your thoughts” (*Letters to Young Lovers*, p. 36).

2. WHAT ARE SOME PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS (CHARACTER, FINANCIAL, SPIRITUAL) FOR A BOY AND GIRL BEFORE GETTING MARRIED?

This question I believe is one of the most important questions to ask ourselves. Space does not permit the development of this subject at this time but allows me to give an abbreviated answer. Financial independence and practical knowledge of money management is very important. It is also important to have a clear perspective on one’s lifestyle, goals, and beliefs. One of the best personal pre-marriage development skills is the ability to communicate effectively. The ability to communicate well with peers, parents, teachers, pastors, and heaven is invaluable.

“Upon no account should the marriage relation be entered upon



until the parties have a knowledge of the duties of practical domestic life.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 87. This knowledge is important for both young men and women. The ability to be self-supporting as a consequence of education or developed skills results in healthy independent freedom. Chapter 13 in the book *Adventist Home* contains more great information worth reading. “Men and women may reach a high standard, if they will but acknowledge Christ as their personal Saviour.”—*Ibid.*, p. 96.

3. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PRACTICAL WAYS OF MAINTAINING A CLEAR HEAD FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION BEFORE FALLING IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE?

It is important to have clear thinking capacities as we relate to potential young men or women that we may want to court. The best way I believe this can be done is by maximizing our relationship on an intellectual, spiritual, and social level, while at the same

time minimizing emotional and physical relations.

“Trust not to your own judgment, and marry no one whom you feel will not be an honor to your father and mother, one who has intelligent and moral worth.”—*Letters to Young Lovers*, p. 36.

“Love is a sentiment so sacred that but few know what it is. It is a term used, but not understood. The warm glow of impulse, the fascination of one young person for another is not love: it does not deserve the name. True love has an intellectual basis, a deep thorough knowledge of the object loved.”—*Ibid.*

4. WHAT IS THE EARLIEST ADVISABLE AGE FOR LOOKING FOR A LIFE PARTNER?

There is a danger of seeking to follow the norms of our culture. This culture may be driven by what we see in our friends, church or world. Age is not the most important factor to get married. Therefore, there is no universal advisable age for looking for a life partner.

Ellen White gives us good advice on this topic, “The young affections should be restrained until the period arrives when sufficient age and experience will make it honorable and safe to unfetter them. A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness of a person as young as himself to be his companion for life.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 79.

It is a well-known fact that today people in the United States

are getting married older than their parents did. Researchers found that today, the national average for marriage for women is 27.6 years. Men marry at a median age of 29.5. The U.S. Census figures in 1968 were 21 and 23 respectively. These statistics are shared not as a guide but only to show that people are seeking life

partners later than their parents did.

Recent research has found that the connections between the emotional part of the brain and the decision-making center don't fully develop until age 25 or so. It is advisable in making life partner decisions that the pre-frontal cortex, the brain's rational part be fully engaged. 

My Commitment

- [] Are you willing to follow God's guidance in your life and say with Jeremiah, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth" (Jeremiah 3:4).
- [] Is it your desire to pray with David, "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies" (Psalm 27:11).
- [] Are you willing to wait patiently for God's timing to find you the right mate? "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14).

By the grace of God, I will wait for God's timing to begin my courtship with the person He has in mind for me.

Signature _____ Date _____

Editor Liliane Balbach, **Layout** Bethany Montrose.

Youth Messenger® (USPS 765-030) is published quarterly by the Young People's Department of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference as an educational service for our youth worldwide. **Web:** <http://www.sdarm.org>, **e-mail:** info@sdarm.org. The *Youth Messenger* is printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, VA 24019-5048. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.

Postmaster: Send address changes to, *Youth Messenger*, P.O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019-0240. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscription requests, and donations should be mailed to the address above. Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3. Copyright © 2019 July-September issue. **Illustrations:** Adobe Stock on front cover and pp. 2-7, 10-15, 20-23, 25-28, 30, 32; Dreamstime on p. 31.

Subscription: United States U.S. \$8.95; single issue U.S. \$2.95; foreign (air mail) U.S. \$17.00.

HIS BANNER
OVER ME IS

Love

—SONG OF SOLOMON 2:4