

# Paths to Marriage



Review the following five most common paths people take in arriving at their decision to marry. Then in your journal, write a brief critique of the pitfalls and benefits of each one, especially with regard to how well each approach contributes to the establishment of an enduring marriage relationship.

After finishing your critique of all five approaches, write some comments about which approaches seem most common among your family members, friends, or community and about which approach you would choose for yourself.

## **The Whirlwind Romance Approach**

Marriages that result from this kind of intense romance of a few months may seem at first to be powerful and impressive, but like a whirlwind, they do not usually last. Researchers have found that courtships of less than six months most frequently lead to later regrets about marriage. It seems that longer acquaintanceship enables people to sort out incompatible partners.

## **The Childhood Sweetheart Approach**

This approach typically involves a couple who have been dating steadily since high school, or earlier. Even if childhood sweethearts go to college, they typically never date anyone else and marry as soon as possible. The advantage of this approach is security. Unfortunately, people may cling to their first love out of fear that another love like it will never be found. This approach can be very limiting, restricting the individuals' experiences of other people and preventing them from growing to new levels of maturity.

## **The "I Want It All" Approach**

In this situation, one member of a dating couple wants to have an exclusive, often sexu-

ally active, relationship—but without any commitment. Usually this approach involves a lack of honesty on the part of one or both individuals about their intentions in the relationship.

## **The Late-Blooming Approach**

Everyone is unique, so it stands to reason that each person has her or his own schedule for exploring close relationships with the other sex. Some people do not begin dating until they are in college or even much later. In this path to marriage, people take their time, letting themselves mature and search for what they want in life, waiting until they reach the point of readiness for a commitment.

## **The Open Exploration Approach**

People who choose this path to marriage see dating as a way of getting to know and appreciate a variety of persons, of sorting out what they want and do *not* want in a partner, and of discovering how to grow and change in response to the needs of other people. The open exploration approach implies a willingness to let go of a relationship that once looked promising but later does not. If a marriage does result, it will be grounded on a solid foundation of knowledge gained through experience.