**Long Distant Relationships:**

Although getting to know a partner from a distance is not the same as being together in person, you *can* build a fruitful friendship and explore a potential future this way. In fact, **long-distance methods of communication** can allow you and your partner to get to know each other in ways that you might not if the two of you were together in the same place regularly. Through long conversations and email contact, you may learn more about some aspects of each other’s character qualities, choices, interests, previous experiences, current interests and activities, and where you see yourselves in the future. It may even be easier to be open and honest when you are in different localities. TIP: Remaining somewhat detached from the outcome of the relationship can assist you to stay in exploration mode – whether you’re in person or far apart.

Of course, your activities together will be more limited if you are in a **long-distance relationship**. From a distance, you can ask each other focused questions, particularly ones that inform you about whether your partner is a good balance for you. When you are together in person, you can deepen your relationship and understand other facets of each other’s character and personality by seeing each other in action and assess whether what you have shared about your lives matches what you are observing. It is best to spend your visits doing activities that maximize getting to know each other. Choose a variety of situations, including those listed above—particularly ones in the "service” section.

Despite some of the potential upsides, there are also some **cautions and pitfalls that are wise to consider with a long-distance relationship**. When you and your partner see one another infrequently, your times together can feel very intense, romantic, and almost “magical.” You may be able to show your “best” selves to each other for these brief periods, but if together for longer periods you may find that other more challenging parts of your personality will start to show. Remember that to sustain any relationship, it is essential to be honest about the “real you” rather than portray a “perfect” picture of yourself that is not the full picture. This is true in your other communications as well. You may actually have no effective way of knowing about each other’s behavior within a real-life context with just brief visits. The “real you” is more likely to be visible with repeated and prolonged face-to-face interactions, and they may only be seen with long visits or moving to the same area.

Additionally, the two of you may think that any problems that occur in your visits just stem from the stress of being apart. This assumption can falsely lead you to believe that being together in a more serious relationship or marriage will alleviate these difficulties and will solve such problems. When only spending short periods together you may end up together, but only to find out that neither of you really knows the other. Vigilance, honesty, prayer, meditation, and consultation with trusted others who can give you objective input about any problems that may be occurring and possibly about your readiness to marry. These can help prevent the pitfall of jumping into a relationship too quickly and with too little information.