citylight | church

DATING FOR CHRISTIANS

CITYLIGHT CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

It's hard to overestimate the significance of marriage in the eyes of God as revealed in his word. Ray Ortlund has written my favorite book about marriage, entitled *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel*. Speaking of the significance of marriage, Ortlund writes, "If the Bible is telling us the truth about reality, then the universe we live in was created primarily with marital romance in mind. The heavens and the earth were created for the marriage of Adam and Eve. The new heavens and the new earth will be created for the marriage of Christ and his bride. The whole of cosmic reality exists as the venue for the eternal honeymoon of the perfect husband with his perfect bride in marital bliss forever and ever. This is the breathtaking claim of the Bible." Marriage is magnificent. So, as we inch our way toward the significant topic of dating, let's begin by briefly reflecting on the goal of dating, which is the magnificence of marriage.

SESSION ONE

5 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ABOUT MARRIAGE

1. **Marriage is _____.**

Genesis 2:18-24 - Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." …21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,
"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

"The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved" (Matthew Henry).

Notes:

2. Marriage is between _____ and _____.

Matthew 19:4-5, reflecting on the creation and goodness of marriage says, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

Notes:

3. Marriage is _____ and normally includes having _____.

Notes:

4. Marriage is meant to be _____ oneness.

Matthew 19:4-6 - He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." As

Ray Ortlund says, "'One flesh' is essential to the biblical view of marriage. It means, one mortal life fully shared. Two selfish me's start learning to think like one unified us, sharing one everything: one life, one reputation, one bed, one suffering, one budget, one family, one mission, and so forth. No barriers. No hiding. No aloofness. Now total openness with total sharing and total solidarity, until death parts them."

Notes:

citylight | church

5. Marriage is a _____.

Ephesians 5:22-33 - Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

John Piper writes, "Marriage is patterned after Christ's covenant relationship to his redeemed people, the church. And therefore, the highest meaning and the most ultimate purpose of marriage is to put the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display. That is why marriage exists. If you are married, that is why you are married. If you hope to be, that should be your dream."

Notes:

citylight | church

SINGLENESS IS PART OF GOD'S GOOD DESIGN FOR SOME

1. Singleness uniquely displays the _____ of the Lord. **1 Corinthians 7:33-34**- 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. 35 I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.
2. Singleness uniquely displays the _____ of the Lord.
3. Singleness uniquely displays the wonder of Christ's family, _____.

Notes:

DATING DEFINED & DESCRIBED

Dating could be defined as, "A season of intentionally and happily pursuing a relationship with a person of the opposite sex for the purpose of discerning God's will concerning marrying them."

1. Only date _____. - **1 Corinthians 7:39** - "A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."
2. The Bible calls for complete _____ _____ for unmarried persons.
3. Dating is meant to be done within the context of _____ life.

Notes:

citylight | church

CONCLUSION: AM I READY TO DATE?

1. Is my identity _____ in Christ?
2. Am I _____ in my relationship with Christ?
3. Am I reasonably stable _____, _____, and _____?
4. Am I open to _____?

Notes:

SESSION TWO
APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO DATING

MEET AT THE RIGHT PLACE (as best you can control it)

Notes:

citylight | church

DATE WITH INTENTION

Dating with intention simply means dating with the end goal of a joyful, happy marriage in mind.

What this doesn't mean:

What this does mean:

Intentionality means communicating clearly and having clear goals for each "phase" of the dating process.

Phase 1: Going on dates

Phase 2: Exclusive dating

Great resource: https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/questions-to-ask-when-preparing-for-marriage

Phase 3: Engagement (this too should be no longer than necessary to plan a wedding).

DATE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH

The local church is a regular gathering of Christians who affirm and oversee one another's membership in Christ and his kingdom through gospel-preaching and gospel-ordinances (Jonathan Leeman).

Involve the church community in your dating decisions and the dating process (this is why it really does help to date people you go to church with). This could look like some or all of the following:

1.
2.
3.
4.

SEEK ENCOURAGING ACCOUNTABILITY

Questions that you can ask an accountability partner to ask you:

1. Are the intentions clear? Do you both know where this is going?

2. How are you pointing one another to Jesus and helping one another to grow in Christ? Is this relationship growing your life in the church or drawing you back from it or neutral?
3. For men: How are you taking responsibility for the health, joy, and progress of the relationship? How are you serving her sacrificially within appropriate bounds? For women: How is he leading the relationship? How are you showing appropriate respect for him lately? Note: you're not married, so this isn't hard and fast.
4. Are you transgressing any boundaries (physical, time-wise, emotional) you have agreed to? If so, how will (note: not "can") you stop doing that this week? How can I help?
5. Have you dated long enough to be confident that you want to marry? Breakup? Don't be afraid for the answer to be "no." Just don't do open-ended dating.

PRIORITIZE SEXUAL HOLINESS

1 Timothy 5:1-2 - Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 - Abstain from every form of evil.

1 Corinthians 6:18 - Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Principles:

citylight | church

MODEL BIBLICAL GENDER ROLES IN DATING (note the word "model")

Notes:

END DATING WELL

Notes:

DATE BY GRACE

Notes: