

We're in the final week of our series called "How To Ruin Your Life," and I've titled tonight's message "7 Signs It's Time to Say 'Bye' to Bae." Tonight we'll be discussing wisdom on dating in this crazy world, and in case you're worried, the point of tonight is not to make you break up with that special someone. Tonight is all about how to date someone in the most godly and effective way.

If you're in middle school you might think that tonight has nothing to do with you, but you're wrong. The Bible is very clear about having these conversations at a young age. In fact, most of the Proverbs are actually a conversation between a father and his son.

The father wants to equip his son at a very young age with the wisdom to navigate through the relationships he will have. Why? Because the patterns that you start now will carry on into your future. No one plans to be divorced by 27, but the patterns we have in sixth grade will ultimately affect how we live as an adult. The way that you live your life right now creates the foundation for how you'll live tomorrow.

Now some of you might have a couple of other worries regarding what we're talking about tonight. Some of you might be wondering: "Is he going to awkwardly talk about how babies are made?" The answer is no. We will not be talking about that, so you can stop sweating and you can stop texting your parents to come pick you up.

Some of you might be wondering, is he going to try to convince me to stop dating, and start some weird Amish courtship thing that leads to an arranged marriage? Again, the answer is no. Tonight I'm going to be talking about seven qualities of a bad dating relationship. Four of those qualities have to deal with the person you're dating, and if they possess one or more of these four, then you may find yourself in a situation where you have to say bye to bae. Three of the qualities we're talking about tonight have to do with you. If you possess one or more of these, you may not be the ideal date, and not only that, but you may not be ready to start dating! So here we go: how to ruin your life by finding seven signs it's time to say bye to bae.

1. You date someone your parents hate.

Last week we talked a lot about honoring your parents, and how they should have a say in our friendships and our future. When we honor our parents, we create a foundation for our dreams. So you may need to say bye to bae if you're dating someone your parents hate.

If your parents hate the person you're dating, there may be a reason behind it besides them being irrationally protective. Your parents might see qualities in that person that they

don't like. Your parents' judgement might sound crazy, but remember, they've been on this earth longer than you and they've seen some stuff go down.

Believe it or not, they might not like the person you're dating because of two reasons: 1) They dated someone just like the person you're dating, and they know the relationship will end worse than a Taylor Swift song. 2) They see themselves in that person. They might have acted just like the person you're dating at some point in their lives.

Sounds creepy and weird, right? But your parents have bought and paid for their wisdom. They've experienced more than you have, and while you might be smelling Axe body spray, they're smelling fuel to a fire that will ruin your life. The Bible is very clear that we must value our parents' judgement.

There are other reasons why your parents might hate the person you're dating, and that's what the next three signs will cover.

2. You're dating someone with no future.

The second sign you should say bye to bae is this: you're dating someone with no future. I'm not talking about someone who hasn't picked out a college; I'm talking about someone who isn't even willing to plan for their future.

This person doesn't do their homework, they don't try to excel at sports or band, and getting them to invest in the relationship feels like a struggle. It feels like an accomplishment if this person texts you once a day. This person makes a sloth look like a NASCAR racer.

Proverbs warns us against people, like in Proverbs 10:26 when it says: *"A lazy person will give you nothing but trouble: they will make you grind your teeth and weep out of frustration."* Sounds like the ideal date, right? Just getting them to invest in a relationship will cause you to cry out in frustration. If this describes the person you want to date, or someone you *are* dating, it might be time to say bye to bae.

3. You're dating someone with no boundaries.

It might be time to say bye to bae if you are dating someone with no boundaries. I know, I know. This sounds like a stereotypical youth talk about dating. But hear me out! When we think of boundaries, we think of that uncomfortable "s" word. Here's a hint: it starts with a "S" and rhymes with "ex." Let me just say cold turkey: sex needs to be off the table when

it comes to dating.

It doesn't matter if you're 13 or 30, in God's eyes it's a big deal. Don't get me wrong, sex is a good thing, but God designed sex to be expressed within the confines of marriage. But when I talk about boundaries, sex isn't the only boundary. In fact, just because you're a virgin does not mean that you're pure.

Biblical purity is not about virginity; purity is all about what's going on in your head and in your heart. You can meet a person of the opposite gender in real life, date them, never have sex while dating, and still live an impure life in your heart. Usually when I tell students this, they ask this dreaded question: How far is too far? At what point am I impure?

When it comes to purity, it's not about how far is too far. Purity is about how much of yourself do you want to give to your future spouse. That sounds ridiculous to think about right now, but someday when you get married you will have to tell your spouse how much of yourself you've given to others, and how much you've saved for them.

I'm not just talking about sex; I'm talking about how many people you've made out with, how many people you shared a little kiss with, and the most gut-wrenching part, you'll have to say how many people you've said "I love you" to.

Here are some boundaries you need to set for dating, and you're going to hate this first one:

- 1) You need to ask your parents for dating boundaries. This goes back to honoring your parents. It's letting them decide how far is too far. What they are really doing is deciding how much you'll be saving for your spouse, and your spouse will thank your parents in the future.
- 2) You need to go to God's Word and let the Holy Spirit set those boundaries in your life. 2 Timothy 2:22 tells us to flee from lustful temptations. It doesn't say get as close as possible to danger as you can. It says to run as far as you can.
- 3) You need to set boundaries on being alone. Commit to group dating. Never allow yourself to be alone with the person. No one wants to make out on a group date, and if you do you're weird.

Remember, purity is not about "How far is too far?" but about "how much will I save for my spouse?"

4. You're dating someone who mistreats you.

This next sign may sound like a no-brainer, but you should really say bye to bae if you're bae is mistreats you. You wouldn't believe how many students I minister to every year who are in abusive relationships. Signs of mistreatment can be when your girlfriend or boyfriend is verbally abusive, your boyfriend or girlfriend is constantly kissing other people, or the person you're dating doesn't honor who you are as a person. Yet no matter how abusive the situation, the students I talk to always keep dating the person who mistreats them. Why?

Because God has wired all of us to need others. God made Adam and Eve a matching set, and without each other they felt incomplete. If you feel the need to date someone, that's not an evil desire. In fact, God wired you to seek relationships. That's why these students keep dating these awful people, because they feel that they *need* to date this person or else they will be incomplete.

Logically and biblically you are wrong if you are dating an abusive person. In Matthew 19:5-6, Jesus explains a godly marital relationship:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

The relationship that Jesus describes is beautiful. He talks about when a man grows up and get married, he will hold fast to his wife, and they will know each other so well that they will be like one person.

Have you ever known someone so well that people can't separate your personalities? This is what a godly marriage looks like. We all want to date and know the person we're dating so well, that people see us as one giant power couple. Everyone wants that relationship goal, and if you don't, you're a cold heartless robot. Just kidding! But seriously, how do you get to that level of knowing each other that deeply?

Jesus uses a very strange phrase when he describes the husband meeting his wife. He says the man will "hold fast" to his wife. This phrase "hold fast" comes from Genesis, and it's a term that comes with a responsibility. When Jesus is saying the man will hold fast, what he's saying is he will be in constant pursuit of his spouse. He will be constantly trying to outdo his bride in showing her love. Not only that, but his wife will fight fire with

fire, and she too will be trying to show love on a deeper level. This hold-fast mentality is an all-in competition of love and honor.

I know that you're not in a married relationship, and so you might be thinking that this doesn't apply to you. But if dating is the game, then marriage is winning. So doesn't it make sense that we seek someone worth marrying?

If you're a guy, you need to seek someone who is worth pursuing for the rest of your life. If you're a girl, you need to find a guy who will try to outdo you in love and honor.

A real man doesn't tear down a woman's self-worth. A real woman doesn't tear down a man's pride. A godly person will hold fast to the person they are dating, because if they're worth fighting for, then they'll show it. If they're not worth pursuing, then sadly they will show that, as well.

5. You're dating without a Q-TIP.

So those were four bad characteristics to look out for in people you might date. Now it's time to figure out if you are datable. So sign number one that you are not, is this: you date without a Q-TIP.

No, this has nothing to do with personal hygiene. Q-TIP is an acronym that stands for: "Quit taking it personally." Cute, right? Q-TIP is a way of life that you have to choose. In a marriage, sometimes the wife says it to herself when she's offended that the husband doesn't reply to her texts fast enough. When she used to take it personally, she took my delayed reply text as a sign that he hated her guts and had moved to Vegas. Now, with Q-TIP, it means he's probably at work, or he's driving.

Before some spouses learned to QTIP, if Spouse didn't see that he cleaned the kitchen or took the trash out, it meant that she didn't value what he did. Now I know she's more interested in him and his day than dirty dishes. Q-TIP will save many relationships, because when you refuse to Q-TIP over the small stuff, it turns into agitation and bitterness, which may lead to a breakup.

The patterns you set now will impact your marriage in the future. No one plans to be divorced at age 30, but when people can't learn to Q-TIP, it can lead to a toxic relationship.

In Song of Solomon 2:15 we see this actively working a marriage when it says: *"Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom."* Still not up-to-date an Old Testament imagery? To us, foxes are adorable little creatures, but to the ancient world, they were a plague and were viewed as more vile than cockroaches.

The fox is a smart creature, and when it sees something it wants, it will find a way to get it. Back when this was written, full-grown foxes would sneak into vineyards and eat all the grapes at the bottom of the vines. So to stop them, workers would create fences to keep them out. Unfortunately, the smaller fox puppies would crawl through the fences or tunnel underneath to their prize. Not only that, but since they were too short to reach the grapes, they would gnaw through the bottom of the vine and bring the entire vine crashing down.

Do you see what the verse saying now? We are constantly on-guard for the bigger problems in a relationship, so we put up fences to keep out the full-grown foxes. But it's usually the small foxes that we leave unguarded. We think, "Well it's just a small, annoying fox, what can it do? It can't even reach the grapes!" Then boom, you're fighting about how your boyfriend called you beautiful, and you don't know why.

This might sound ridiculous, but it's a real struggle in every relationship. It's the small foxes that bring down the vine. Learn to Q-TIP. It may save your future marriage.

6. You're "dating for experience."

The next sign that you're not ready to date is if you're "dating for experience." The person who dates for experience is the person who is dating because everyone else is dating. This person may not think this way of thinking is destructive, but, like I mentioned earlier, when you get married you have to spill the beans on your past. "Don't worry honey, I only dated her for the experience." Imagine saying that to your spouse.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us that *"there is a time and a season for everything."* There is a time to start dating, and it's not when you just want the experience. The time to date is when you're ready to look for your future spouse. You should never date someone you would never marry, because the ultimate experience isn't in dating but the marriage itself. This may sound extreme, but if you wait to date until you're ready to get married, you'll save yourself, the people you date, and your future spouse a ton of heartbreak.

7. You're dating to feel complete.

The final sign that you're not ready to date is this: you are dating to feel complete. Sometimes this *looks* like dating for experience. It might look like you're dating because everyone else is.

But dating to feel complete is slightly different. The person who is dating to feel complete is only happy when they're in a relationship. When they're not in a relationship, they are miserable. It doesn't matter if the person they're dating is a total jerk; they just want to be in a relationship.

Like I said earlier, God has wired you to desire relationships. God wants us to find that special someone, and the verse about Adam pursuing Eve showed us that. But if you really analyze the relationship between Adam and Eve, it was not made up of two people becoming one. It was actually made up of three people becoming one. The missing ingredient to their special sauce was God. Adam and Eve had a personal relationship with the Creator that sealed the deal on them being together. When God was in the mix, their relationship was perfect. When they kicked him out, they quickly forgot how to Q-TIP.

God has designed us to desire relationships, but he never designed a certain person to complete you. That's a job that only He can do. When you put the pressure on someone else to make you whole, it will only end in disaster.

Proverbs 13:12 tells us that: *"Hope deferred will make a heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life."* What we see here is that when we put all our hope on something that was created, it will always leave us sick and empty. It's like replacing all your meals with gummy vitamins or replacing your car's gas with water.

You were never meant to be completed by something or someone from this Earth. The only thing that can complete you and make you whole is the Creator himself. That's why the Proverb says, *"A desire fulfilled is a tree of life."* When God becomes a part of your relationship, it's like finding the perfect relationship Adam and Eve had.

Do you want to have a great dating relationship? Then you need to know that a person can't complete you. Matthew 6:33 says that when we pursue God like a husband and wife pursue each other, the rest of the things we once desired seem boring and mediocre. When you first start dating, Make it very clear: "You can't complete me; my Savior already did that on the cross." I would also tell her/him that I don't play for second, and I don't date for experience, I date someone because they might be my future spouse.

At first they might think that this some strong language for a first date, but what happens it that you take pressure off of her/him to try to complete me. Tell them that

you are in it to win it, and that she/he is being viewed as someone worth fighting for.

Is dating wrong? No. But it does have a time and a season, and most of you are not in that season because you need a relationship with God that will give you hope for your future. Dating leads to some beautiful things, but first you need to be someone who is worth the pursuit, and you need to find someone who is worthy to go on that adventure with you.