

Proverbs for the Marriage and Family, “What Does the Bible Say about Dating?”

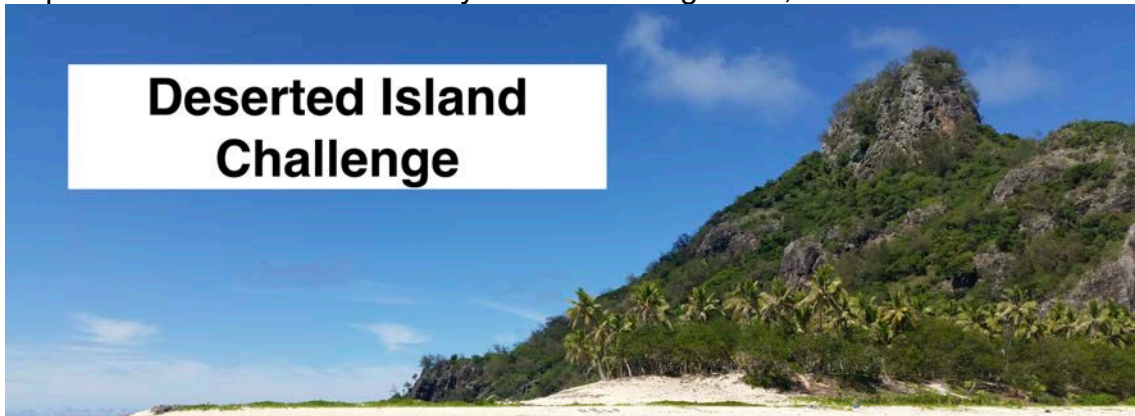
11.12.23

Well, we come to the end of our journey. A journey that’s taken 11 weeks as we’ve talked about “Marriage and the Family.” We’ve seen and studied the God-given role of: Fathers, Mothers and Children. We’ve seen what Husbands Need, Wives Need and Children Need. We’ve talked about divorce, remarriage and singleness. We’ve talked about parenting and the need for discipline and obedience. Discipline that’s not too hard...not too soft (but the Goldilocks Principle), “Just right.” And last week: a wasteful brother and a proud legalistic brother, as we saw the mercy of loving father.

Today we’re going to conclude our time in this series by talking about where it all begins? Where what begins? This thing called family... It all begins with Marriage.

As you’re turning...I want to take a few minutes to set the tone of this message. We all know that marriage...biblical marriage is the act of and celebration of a man and a woman coming together, declaring their intentions for one another for loving each other, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, till death do us part... This is how marriage was designed to be by God. But, how do we get to this place?

Think with me about marriage. It’s certainly changed in our culture. Today, the Supreme Court says that two people of the same-sex can marry. Is that marriage? No, because we’re on our...



Marriage is to be between one man and one woman for life...so says, Scripture. Yet, even in Christendom, this Biblical tenet is falling out of favor. Recently, Andy Stanley:



the son of Charles Stanley, who pastors a large, multi-site, church in Atlanta hosted a conference called: “Unconditional.” This was a 2-day conference which was designed especially for parents of LGBTQ+ children and ministry leaders. Here’s what was on their advertising material:

“You will be equipped, refreshed and inspired as you hear from leading communicators on topics that speak to your heart, soul and mind. No matter what theological stance you hold, we invite you to listen, reflect and learn as we approach this topic from the quieter middle space.” North Point Ministries

Church, this “quieter middle space” doesn’t exist. Listen carefully, you’re either for gay marriage or against it. You either believe the Word of God or you don’t. You see, we’re on our Deserted Island with only the Bible. But, that’s not the case for even some “Christians” in our country. See this man:



That’s David Gushee. He spoke at the “Unconditional” conference and I want to show you what he says about marriage:

“I’m instead asking whether devout gay and lesbian Christians might be able to participate in the covenantal marital, sexual, ethical standard; one person for life, faithful and exclusive in a loving, non-exploitative, non-coercive, reciprocal relationship that is the highest expression of Christian sexual ethics, which in fact a goodly number are already doing. In conclusion to this point, I can’t find a compelling reason to say ‘no’ anymore.” David Gushee

That’s all a bunch of gobbledegook for: “I’m good with gay marriage.” And he claims to be a Christian and he has his Master of Divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY where Al Mohler is president. But, oh has he changed. And so has Andy Stanley, who now says this:

“If your theology gets in the way of ministry, like if there's somebody you can't minister to because of your theology, you have the wrong theology.” Andy Stanley

Adrian Rogers said this, and I believe this sums up well what’s going on in Christendom.

“We’re at a point in Christianity where people don’t care if you can back it up with the Bible. Their feelings, desires and emotions override what Scripture says. They don’t follow Christ. They follow self.” Adrian Rogers

But church family, as followers of Jesus, His Word must drive us...not our feelings. And that brings us to His Word, that you’ve seen many times. Here’s what Jesus says about marriage:

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and 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.”

No, man doesn’t get to make the decision as to what marriage is. God does. He created the institution of marriage...it’s God’s Divine Design. Now, I say all of this because we have to understand, to have a Christian family, we need to have a Christian marriage. So, we’re going to make the assumption this morning that we’re going to look at marriage and how to arrive to the marriage altar, God’s way...not man’s way...not the culture’s way...or even some misguided “Christian’s way.”

Turn in your bibles to **Song of Solomon, chapter 2**. This is not a book we’re in every day. This book is really a love story, but there is a warning offered early on. Let’s see it in verse 7.

Song of Solomon 2:7

⁷ I adjure you,^[a] O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

This means we need to be very careful about how we approach relationships and getting to the eventual wedding. Unfortunately, the truth is...we’re not being very careful. Take a look at this...when you’ve got one of these...what does it mean...



With a turnstile, you’ve got a lot of people to count. You see these in stadiums and airports and arenas. Now the reason I show you this is because that’s pretty much the process we go through in America to reach our eventual wedding partner. People go through a lot of people. According to *Forbes Health*, the average man now marries at age 30 and the average lady at 28 and according to *Psychology Today*, they’ve had 4-6 former partners whom they “dated” before marriage. Now, let me ask you something...those of you here today...if you could do it over, would you choose to only have dated your spouse? If you can’t say yes, don’t tell them. And I would argue, something’s wrong with you. Perhaps you’ve been trained by the culture and you brought something else with you on the deserted island besides the Bible.

Think about it. If you study the statistics on marriage and divorce, there has been a direct correlation in the proportionate rise of divorce as dating came in vogue after WWII. Prior to that you “courted.” Courting is where a young man would come to the parent’s home of a young lady and sit in the parlor or on the front porch and begin to develop the relationship. But things changed after the WWII. As

we talked a few Sundays ago, we got rich as a nation and people could afford cars for their kids...and then the drive-in came into being...



Like “Arnold’s Drive-in” made famous by the TV-show “Happy Days.” And by the 1950’s, dating was all the rage and Drive-ins and outdoor movie theaters popped up everywhere...and you would park your car and “watch the movie.” Hmm...

Can I remind you what the Bible says:

Ephesians 5:3

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

1 Timothy 4:12

¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

The problem with dating in America is that it’s done with so little thought...so little purpose other than “having a good time...getting to know someone.” The problem is: where does that often lead?

I want you to do something for me, please: If you hold up your hands...and imagine, this a guy on the left and a lady on the left and let’s say you meet...you touch the thumbs...then you find out that you have the little things in common (the pinkies touch), the big things in common (the middle fingers touch) and you’re pointing in the same direction (the pointer fingers touch), what’s left? The ring fingers and that represents intimacy and marriage. How long do you think you can hold your fingers like this? Not long...before you know it, **they’ll touch, because that’s what is natural in this position and the same is true in dating.**

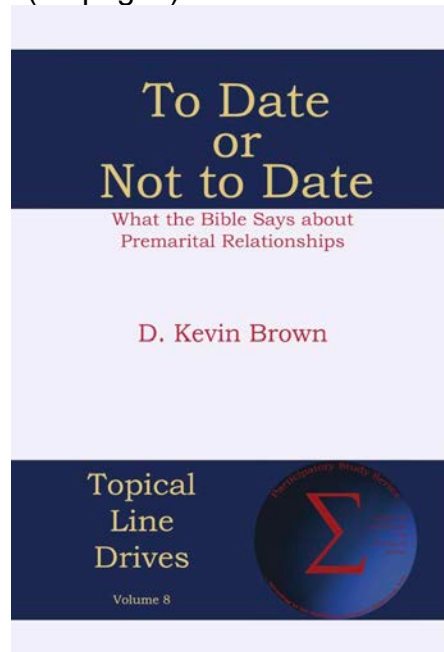
Church, I’ll be blunt, for many young people dating is simply **tasting the fruit without buying it.** AND, unfortunately, many parents go along with it...because they live vicariously through their kids. It’s kind of a badge of honor that their kid is “wanted.” Because maybe they weren’t. They like the attention. Hmm...

In our culture sexual sin is rampant. And yet, Scripture teaches, if we’re going to follow Jesus, we’re supposed to save sexual intimacy for marriage...we’re to keep that intimacy in the fireplace of marriage, not set fires anywhere and everywhere...that burns down lives. The Bible says we aren’t to defraud or “take advantage” of one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

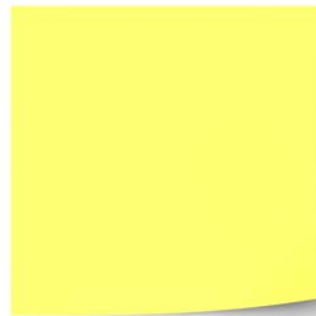
³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification:^[b] that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body^[a] in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Church family, American dating is not something that prizes purity. And, I say “American,” because I read an article where a missionary from the states went to Uganda in Africa), and he used the word “dating” and the translator had no word for it. You see, “Dating” is totally a westernized invention. A few years ago, I wrote a little book (31 pages):



“To Date or Not to Date, What Does the Bible Say about Premarital Relationships.” The majority of what I’m sharing with you today is in that book. In fact, I have some copies in the Decision Room on the top shelf of the book shelf. You are welcome to one. And BTW...all of my sermon notes, including this sermon are online under the “Message Tab.”

Church, what we’re doing today with this casual dating has not been healthy for marriage in America. I would argue, we’ve been practicing serial divorce by all of these multiple relationships. It’s like a Sticky Note...



How many times can you place a sticky note on something and pull it off before it doesn't stick anymore? Jesus said, that a husband is to CLEAVE, "be glued to," "stuck to" his wife. In America, we're losing our sticky. Literally in our brains...neuroscientists tell us, when we go through multiple breakups, we teach the brain how to break up. And we wonder why there are so many divorces. **Yes, we exchange wedding vows and put rings on fingers, but are we naïve to think that a metal band is going to change anything?**

Church, here's the point: you can't take a distinctly American cultural phenomenon such as dating and somehow try to make that phenomenon something that's Biblical...that Christians should do, because "dating" as it is practiced in America is not in the Bible. You say, "Are you saying: 'Don't date.'" No, not necessarily. I'm just saying, "Don't do so, so casually...with no clear purpose or intentions?"

But in our day...parents don't have much "say" in who their kids date...it's like they're told to stay out of it...it's their decision. Really? Hey dad, when you bought your daughter or son their first car...did they make that decision without your help? Hey mom...don't moms go with their daughters to pick out and say, "Yes, to the wedding dress?" But we have no say in who they date?

Dad, that young man who wants to come date your daughter needs be able to pay the Bride's Price. Adam paid the Bride's Price with a rib. You say, what's the Bride's Price? Well, it simply means he can provide for her. And if he can't do that...I would argue, they're awakening love too soon. I would ask the young man who's pulled up in your driveway, "What are intentions with my daughter?" And another question is: who paid for the gas in your truck? Does he have a job? Can he support her?

Church, Jesus set the example, when He paid the Bride's Price for us with (not a rib), but with His own flesh and blood. He bought us at a price.

Titus 2:14

14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

You see, God is jealous for us...just like I am for Pam.

2 Corinthians 11:2

2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Did you catch that...one husband...pure virgin... We don't even seek those things in our day. Dads, we must think long and hard about our role in getting our sons and daughters to their wedding day as virgins. As the father of three daughters...having given two daughters away already at their wedding, I knew I had a responsibility on my shoulders to protect them. And I do for my remaining unmarried son and daughter. Martin Luther, the great leader of the Protestant Reformation said this: **"I have brought up a daughter with great expense and effort, care and peril, diligence and labour, and for many years I have ventured my entire life, my person and possessions in the undertaking... And now she is not to be better protected for me than my cow, lost in the woods, which any wolf may devour? Who would approve of this? Likewise, is my child to stand there free for all, so that any knave [unprincipled person], unknown to me would have the unlimited opportunity to secretly steal her from me and take her away without my knowledge and will? Would I allow this knave to take my child, whom I've brought up with painful care, and he even be rewarded for the grief and harm he has caused me and then be heir of the possessions I have acquired with pains and labor? Surely this is rewarding wickedness with honor; this is inviting grief and injury."** Martin Luther

Let me ask you a question. Do you think God knows who your kid's mate is supposed to be? Do you think He needs our help revealing whom that person is to them? Let me ask you this: How many options did Adam have in the Garden? Who did he date before God brought him Eve? Did he have choices? Nope. Only Eve.

Think about this way...we're moving toward Christmas and Christmas "happened" with two virgins:



Joseph and Mary. God chose two virgins to give birth to His Son...Jesus. You say, "How do you know Joseph was a virgin." Well, I can't prove it with chapter and verse, but I'm convinced if God chose a young lady, Mary, a teenage girl who was a virgin; I'm convinced He did likewise with the young man, Joseph. You see, Joseph and Mary were betrothed or pledged to one another. Betrothal was much stronger than even our engagements today. The betrothal could only be broken only by a certificate of divorce.

Joseph and Mary were pure. Why shouldn't we expect the same for our young people in our day? We should. But, so many don't. So much of what we do in our culture is to make life easier on ourselves. Like prolonging marriage until we get out of school...even though you can afford to get married...you just wait...for financial reasons...but, not sexual reasons.

Pam and I got married when she was still in college because we wanted to do life together. I had a job and could provide. It was meager. We lived in a tiny little apartment with wall-to-wall yellow linoleum, and every time it rained hard...mud and dirt flowed down the bedroom wall...we didn't have a washing machine, we went to a laundromat. But I wouldn't change it for anything...because we were TOGETHER, scripturally. We weren't cohabitating, which is the norm today; yet, 50 years ago that was totally unacceptable in polite culture.

Sure...it's cheaper...you split the rent...and the government will give you money for having kids as a single parent. No! Don't get married...you'll lose the money. But, here's the thing...according to ChristianPost.com, a "Christian" man is 53% more likely to struggle in his relationship with his "partner" than a married man and a "Christian" woman is 73% more likely to struggle in her relationship with her "partner" than a married woman. And here's a stat that's even more telling: 87% of the "Christian" women who "attended church" were more likely to be struggling in their relationship. You think? Can I remind us again:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification:^[b] that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body^[a] in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.

Church, this is what we've been showing you for 11-weeks...



That's a mom and a dad and kids...and we've portrayed that as a Biblical family...so that man and woman are married. That's God's Divine Design. Now, I don't say these things to offend anyone...but, it's not my job to tickle ears or fit the cultural narrative...it's my job to teach, train and equip from the Word of God, which is our final authority. Period. I do so in love...but, I must teach the truth. The most loving thing you can do for someone is tell them the truth...and just because it's loving...doesn't always mean it's going to feel good. Jesus showed His love for us on a cross.

So, how might we reshape “Relationship Making” today? How should we see getting to the marriage altar? What does that look like...and here's the thing: I don't care if you call it dating...but, might we call it “dating with a purpose?” For considerations See the screens:

Four Considerations

1. **Date with a Purpose**
2. **Prepare Yourself**
3. **Don't Worry What Everybody Else is Doing**
4. **Go for the Gold**

#1 Date with a Purpose

If you're going to date, you need to do so with purpose. In other words, could you see yourself marrying that person you're going out with? If you laugh at that because you're thinking...we're not thinking about marriage...then I ask you kindly: “What are you doing? Why are you dating? You're going to potentially get yourself into trouble without a purpose.” Something else you need to think about are **“red flags.”** Red flags? Yes, like:

Red Flags in Relationships

1. Irrational jealousy, the need to be in control
 2. Quick temper
 3. Cruelty toward animals
 4. Attempts to isolate you from your family
 5. Drug or alcohol abuse
 6. Disrespect for boundaries, privacy, personal space
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And this next list is important as well.

Considerations for a Future Mate:

- They're good looking, but what about inside?

- What kind of personality do they have?
 - What kind of personal discipline do they have?
 - Can they get along with others?
 - Do they have a work ethic?
 - How about a sense of humor?
 - How do they handle stress?
 - Can they handle money?
 - Is there a righteousness and purity about their demeanor?
 - Will they draw you closer to God or pull you away?
 - How do they talk, dress, act?
 - What's their attitude toward their parents? How do they speak to them?
 - How do they treat their siblings?
 - How do they treat children?
 - How do they relate to God?
 - Do they love Jesus? The Bible? The church?
-

You better have as the main consideration that they're saved:

2 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Think about these things...for to do so, is to Date with a Purpose.

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#2 Prepare Yourself

When people think of getting married, they always think of "finding the right person." Are you the "right person?" Are you preparing yourself? That takes preparation on your part to get the desired result. It's like planting a garden. The tomatoes and corn don't just appear. There's a lot of work to get to that end result. Plowing, planting, watering, weeding...lots of work. So, may I encourage you...don't become so engrossed in finding the "right person" that you forget to *become* the "right person," as you trust the Lord to orchestrate the "who" and the "when." As you wait and trust...prepare.

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#3 Don't Worry about What Everyone Else is Doing

It doesn't matter what everyone else is doing. I can't say this strongly enough. But I get it...in this social media driven world...we do look at what everyone else is doing...and we're like a parakeet who just repeats everything he hears. Church family, I'm not naïve. I know most of the teens in this room are probably going to continue to date. The dye is cast in the wool. But for the younger parents with younger kids...mom and dad as your kids are little...teach and train them that it's okay if they don't have someone to go to the dance with...they're not weird...they're just choosing not to go down that path.

And may I also say...I believe there may be some in the room who would like to begin to pursue purity, but feel that you've blown it and can't. That's a lie... there is forgiveness with the Lord and He can restore us. Are there consequences for sin? Yes...but, aren't you glad that God's forgiveness and love cover a multitude of sins. Might I offer you one last consideration...#4

Four Considerations

- 1. Date with a Purpose**
 - 2. Prepare Yourself**
 - 3. Don't Worry What Everybody Else is Doing**
 - 4. Go for the Gold**
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#4 Go for the Gold

Let me explain. If you seek to win the gold medal in the Olympics...



like our US track star, Allyson Felix, (who is BTW a Christian), can you live like everyone else? Can you eat Big Macs and fries for every meal? Can you go to bed late and never work out? No! You'll never win the gold. Instead, you have to dedicate yourself and commit yourself to living totally different from everyone else. Oh yeah...that's the Christian lifestyle too, isn't it? That's young people living like this...

1 Timothy 4:12

¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Hey, Mom and Dad, if we truly believe that God is all-powerful and that His word is the final authority in all things, then WE WILL teach our children to trust Him in all things...even for a future mate. WE WILL teach our children to be courageous, to be *peculiar* as the Bible teaches. In fact, if you choose to build this kind of thinking into their minds, you will rejoice with them, as they realize the pressure is off and they can simply spend their teenage years growing spiritually without the pressure of trying to be in a relationship, which only adds to the many demands they already have as young people.

So, would you consider teaching them the idea of "Going for Gold," and not worrying about what everyone else is doing? Would you raise the bar, knowing it's okay to teach them to save themselves for marriage and trust the Lord to bring that person He has designed for them into their lives, because He knows exactly who that is.

Last thought church family: there's going to be a wedding in heaven. A wedding between Jesus and us...we're His bride to be. We're betrothed to Him right now...and He's not casually dating us...He's paid: "The Bride's Price" to His Father with His own life...and one day we'll be married to Him and celebrate at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. To God be the glory! Until then...we live for Him...His way...the Bible way.
