

The Road of Romance

Song of Solomon 2

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ILLUSTRATION/JOKE: More and more of the couples that I do pre-marriage counseling with met - ONLINE.

I was single at the very beginning of the information revolution. Online dating was in it's very, very early stage. It wasn't long after I got online... with the old dial up modem, and when AOL was still a thing. I remember my first and only online relationship - it was a girl in TX. She was a good christian girl... pretty attractive... and she mailed me cookies....I thought it had real potential... until I discovered she was coco for coco-puffs.

So if you are into the online dating scene... let me give you a little advice.

ONLINE DATING HEAD'S UP:

- If a woman says she's **40ish**, that means she 39 1/2. If a man says he is 40ish that means he is 52 and looking for a 25 year old.
- If a guy says he's **huggable**, that means he's carrying a few extra lbs and has more body hair than sasquash.
- If a woman says she's **romantic** that means she looks better by candle light.
- If a guy says he's **laid back**, that means he lives in his parents basement and doesn't have a job.
- If a girl says she is **bubbly** and fun that means - she NEVER shuts up.
- If a lady says she is an **independent** woman, that means she has control issues. She will be your boss and make you like it.
- If a guy says he is **average looking** that means he fell from the ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down.

INTRODUCTION: *Modernity likes to pretend.*

- No longer does the literature professor ask, "What does this novel mean?" Today the question is, "what does this novel mean to you?"
- The concept that two + two = four is up for debate.
- Even your gender is presented as a matter of personal preference and expression.

But roads are old fashion. Imagine approaching a road with the same rules we apply to so many other things in this modern world:

- The road has curves, it winds through the forrest. But suppose we say, "I like to think of this road as straight".
- The road has a posted speed limit of 25MPH. But suppose we say, "I like to see this road as haven't no limit to my speed".

You see, the Road was not built by Millennials. The road doesn't care what your opinion is. It was laid in asphalt. It is inflexible, it is mean, it is old fashion.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon you, the driver, to accommodate the road, it will NOT accommodate you. You must break when it says break and you must accelerate when it says accelerate. It helps you - it provides guardrails, to keep you out of the ditch. But it will not do the driving for you.

Romance is in many ways like a road. It's old fashion, it's mean, sometimes brutal, it will help you, it will warn you, but it will not accommodate you. And if you do not honor it's posted warnings and take responsibly as the driver - you will find yourself in a ditch.

Perhaps some of you here today, or those watching online are in the ditch of romance. We all have been there. As a matter of fact, on this road, broken hearts cover the grass like litter.

So have even opted for the exit ramp and got off the road of romance all together. You've seen them - they are roommates, but not lovers. They coexist, but no longer communicate. They eat together, but they no longer dine. In some ways they died 15 years ago, they just haven't notified the funeral home yet.

May it not be so among you. See your marriage points to something far bigger than your marriage. It points to the relationship between Jesus Christ and his redeemed people, those who are collectively called, "His bride".

So for you - a dead, stale relationship is not an option. You are called to something greater, you are called to PROCEED, but please, proceed with caution.

CONTEXT: We began last week in Chapter 1 as Solomon and the Shulamite introduced us to their relationship. Two people in love. All of the feel good chemicals were firing. Here in Chapter 2, the romance continues.

TEXT: Song of Solomon 2:8–15 (ESV)

⁸ The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. ⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice.

Do you remember your first date with the love of your life? When Julie and I really started dating, it was like that moment in Wizard of Oz when things turn from black and white to color. The whole world seemed to come alive.

I had worked hard to win her over. She wasn't that into me to begin with. There was talk of a restraining order. But eventually, she gave in!

By the way, the ones you have to WIN make the best wives. If she doesn't make you drop a few pounds, get back in the gym, get a tan, wash and wax your truck... are you sure she's the one?

Nothing motivates a young man like a young lady.

Solomon is leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. ⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.

You can almost hear the William Tell overture in the background. And men, some of us have been there.

Why is it that the same couple who couldn't be happier to be with one another will set across the table from one other 10 years later and can't think of a thing to say?

Well, it's very simply - they quit progressing down the **ROAD OF ROMANCE**. And the road requires that you drive, it will not do the driving for you. And you my friend, and not a TESLA. There is no auto pilot.

So let's talk about... first of all....

1. How and When to Accelerate

¹⁰ My beloved speaks and says to me

It all begins with WORDS. I am told that the average man speaks 7,000 words in a day and the average woman speaks 20,000.

At work, he uses 6,950 of his words. When he gets home the wife asks, "how was your day" and in his mind a sufficient answer is what? GOOD. But in her mind he didn't even answer the question.

She says, "well mine was fantastic, Betty and I had brunch... she order that Avocado toast that I like, you know we really should look into getting an Avocado tree in our backyard, we do live in Florida, I saw a documentary about how they will grow hear. Anyway, Betty wore a new color nail polish, I didn't like it very much... but I've been thinking...."

Why the difference? She's got 10,000 words to get out!

Men, PRO TIP - expand your vocabulary.

Scripture teaches that the power of LIFE AND DEATH are in the tongue. If you want to revive your romantic relationship - it begins with words... notice what he says...

10b. : "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and **come away**,

He is asking her out.

A date is a planned event where two people intentionally COME AWAY from the regular routines of life in order to know one another better and love one another more.

It doesn't have to cost a fortune. But it does have to be intentional.

¹¹ for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. ¹² The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. ¹³ The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and **come away**.

One of my mentors taught me when Julie and I first married - that if you really want to change your life, you have to change your **RHYTHMS**. Live intentionally and program into your routines certain habits that are designed to give you the life you desire.

RYTHEM OF ROMANCE

- **Dialogue Daily** - Julie and I purpose to have one meal together every day. Cell phones are not allowed. One conversation at time is a rule we have.
- **Date Weekly** - Friday night is our night. We get out of town typically. Occasionally we will double date with another couple, but most of the time its just us. I plan some she plans some.

PRO TIP #2 - Get the Open Table App and make reservations three months at a time.

- **Depart Quarterly** - About four times a year we do an overnight somewhere just she and I.
- **Deport Annually** - Once a year, we try to get away and focus on one another and our relationship.

LISTEN - Dave Ramsey was right, if you want to live like no one else, you have live like no one else. That applies to romance. You must be intentional.

¹⁴ O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

Dates are meant to give life to your relationship. Encouragement is the key to giving life. Remember how earlier in **chapter 2** she said ⁴ He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

He loves her and he wants everyone to know.

Dating is affirmation gone public.

There are at least 5 levels of affirmation

- a. **Private Verbal Affirmation** - This is saying something affirming or encouraging to you husband or wife. Private verbal affirmation is incredibly important, it should be the MOST frequent. However, it's private - it allows for deniability.
- b. **Private Written Affirmation** - This is a note, a card, and email a text message. It's just between the two of you, but you have but your thoughts in ink. No deniability.
- c. **Public Verbal Affirmation** - That is saying something about your spouse in front of their peers. This takes the encouragement to an entire new level. It communicates your commitment to others.
- d. **Public Written Affirmation** - That is you are putting something in written, you are letting go of deniability, and you going public at the same time.
- e. **Public Physical Affirmation** - This is the highest level of compliment. This is an embrace, a smile, an occasional kiss, holding hands - Appropriate public displays of affection. This is the highest possible level of communicating your love for another person. This is a date night. This is what "His banner over me is love" is all about.

So that is how to accelerate... but you also need to know...

2. How and When to Hit the Breaks

¹⁵ Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom."

The little foxes would come in a ruin a vineyard. They would eat the sweet blossoms before they turned into fruit. They would dig around the vine and kill it.

There are little foxes in every single marriage. Be warned, many times, especially early on the little foxes come out on date nights. So you have to be intentional to not make date nights about FIXING your spouse. But do allow some time, maybe one in 5 dates to catch the little foxes.

Let me mention a few:

- **Sins unforgiven** - If you aren't quick to forgive, scripture tells us that a root of bitterness can form in your heart... and roots never stay hidden.. inevitably they spring up and defile many.
- **Hurtful habits** - Sometimes things we say or do can hurt our spouse and we may not even be aware of it. Take time to listen and don't tell her that her feelings are wrong. Fix you not her.
- **Misaligned Priorities** - This can happen when the marriage revolves around the kids. The kids always come first. LISTEN: Kids, especially when they are younger have a little radar... if they sense that mom and dad are becoming too focused on each other, they will get in there and kill it.

I never understood kids sleeping in the same bed with mom and dad. My dad put my room as far from his room as he could possibly get it and I do the same with mine.

You say, well what if something happens in the night... listen kids are resilient they normally survive.

- **Third Party Threats** - Be aware of third parties that can threaten a marriage.

BOUNDARIES - FOR SOMEONE WHO ISN'T YOUR SPOUCE.

You need to LIMIT the three T's

- **Limit TIME** - You will be tempted to spend way too much time with this person. You will be tempted to abandon your friends. LISTEN - do not do that. If you have a group of godly friends, fold this new person into your spiritual community.
- **Limit TALK** - Words are POWERFUL - limit them.

ILLUSTRATION: I had made a commitment when I was single to not say, "I love you" to any girl outside my family, unless the next words out of my mouth would be, "will you marry me". When I looked into Julie's eyes and said, "I love you" for the first time, she knew what was coming next. GUYS - don't toss that phrase around. Girls encourage them not to.

- **Limit TOUCH** - Physical Touch is POWERFUL - have clear limits.

REMEMBER - it tends to progress, set limits. Talk about your boundaries with your family, your godly friends.

SIMPLE RULES FOR DATING AS A CHRISTIAN SINGLE:

- Set Standards BEFORE You date - be clear, communicate them.
- 4 feet on the floor. That's your's and hers. Generally speaking, once someone's feet come off the floor convictions begin to be compromised.
- Keep everything buttoned, zipped, latched, twisted, tied...whatever.
- Keep your tongue in your own mouth. There is something about swapping spit that kills convictions in dating. Keep your spit in your own mouth.

You say, "Tell 'em preacher, these teenagers need to hear this". I have a Pastor friend south of here and he tells me that one of the biggest outbreaks of STD's in the state of Florida happened at THE VILLAGES a retirement community.

This isn't just for teens.

FOCUS ON BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP. THAT IS THE STRONGEST FOUNDATION FOR A MARRIAGE.

I know people who have been married for 30 years who don't have a spiritual friendship.

INVITATION/CONCLUSION:

If a couple is not dating generally it's a man problem.

When Jesus wants to change a marriage, Jesus changes a man.

Jesus changes a man by making the man like his God.

God is a pursuing God.

The cross, is GOD shouting - **I love you, I lost you, I want you back!**

As God loved you and pursued you - you are to love and pursue your wife. That is the Gospel.