

I. Intro

A. Recap: Divorce

1. **TRC Definition:** Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church.
 - a. God strategically, miraculously put together to separate individuals, making them one flesh.
 - b. What God has put together, let no man separate.
2. God HATES divorce.
 - a. If a loving, longsuffering marriage reflects His character, divorce defames His character.
 - b. Although He withdraws for seasons (in loving discipline), He is pursuing reconciliation
3. Call Concerning Divorce: REPENT!
 - a. Confess our sin concerning divorce and turn.
4. Divorce only exposes the hard hearts of mankind.
 - a. Use divorce as a punishment, to sever entire families.
 - b. Use divorce to assert personal rights.

B. Culture of Isolation is threatening all aspects of Christian **COMMUNITY.**

1. Believers in Jesus were not created for isolation.
2. Without accountability to one another, we are isolated sheep.

II. Culture of Isolation is Problematic in Dating

A. **Dating Dilemma:** The Bible is silent about dating (at least our Western view of dating).

1. Marriages in the Bible were usually arranged.

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- a. No mention of two people...
 - i. Dating
 - ii. Seeing each other
 2. The church (tragically) has been silent when it comes to giving direction in dating.
 - a. Singles have been left to figure out the pathway to getting married on their own.
 3. The dating scene among Western believers has evolved into a private, spiritually dangerous exercise that we hope to survive.
 4. Although I'm not advocating for arranged marriages, there are some principles we can learn from the way in which these marriages came together.

B. The Samson Method of Searching (Isolation)

¹ Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. ² So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." ³ Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well." (Judges 14:1-3)

1. Samson's moves were dictated by his own will and expertise.
 - a. He said to his father, *"I've seen her and she pleases me."*
 - i. Samson knew what he wanted.
 - b. No sooner than he married what he wanted, his wife set him up to be taken by her family.
 - c. His wife was then given to one of his friends. (14:20)

After some days, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife with a young goat. And he said, "I will go in to my wife in the chamber." But her father would not allow him to go in. ² And her father said, "I really thought that

you utterly hated her, so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead.” (Judg. 15:1-2)

2. The common single believer nowadays is much like Samson: Samson’s chooser was broke!
 - a. Not only was Samson’s chooser broke, but he refused to receive help from any of those around him.
 - b. Samson made bad independent choice after bad independent choice.
 - i. Gotta have it wife (**Judges 14:1-3**)
 - ii. Gotta have it harlot (**Judges 16:1-3**)
 - iii. And then... Delilah. (**Judges 16:4-5**)
 - c. Instead of Samson’s chooser getting more accurate and efficient with time and experience, it got worse.
3. Many of us have taken the Samson Approach to dating.
 - a. Making choices that are grounded in independence/isolation.
 - b. To make matters worse, our choosers are broken and we won’t even ask for help.

C. The Isaac Method of Searching (Community)

¹ Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. ² So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, “Please, put your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; ⁴ but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” (Gen. 24:1-4)

1. Isaac allowed others into the process of helping him settle on a wife.
 - a. Isaac trusted his father so much that he submitted to his father’s wisdom.

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- i. Even submitted to the idea of His father (Abram) delegating the assignment to the family servant, Eleazar.
 2. Isaac displayed incredible humility and submission in the choosing process.
 3. Abraham and his servant didn't do half-bad.
 - a. She was just what Isaac liked... physically.

¹⁶ *Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. (Gen. 24:16a)*

- b. Rebekah was just what Isaac liked. But she was also just what Isaac needed! (**Gen. 24:16-20**)
 - i. Trusted God
 - ii. Virtuous woman.
 - iii. Kind, hospitable, merciful (even to strangers).

II. Recommended Steps

A. **Collect Data:** In the hopes that you've found love.

1. Eros: *Love that is based on feelings of arousal and physical attraction.*
 - a. Make a quality decision with your eyes.
 - b. Can you (gladly) look at that face for the rest of your life?
 - c. Can he/she keep your attention?
 - i. Look forward to water from your own cistern.
 - d. **Prov. 5: 15-18:** ¹⁸ *Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,... Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.*
2. Phileo: *Love that is based on common interests and comradery.*
 - a. Do you have things in common that bring you together and form a bond?

⁷ *‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife*
⁸ *and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh.*
⁹ *What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Mk. 10:8-9)*

b. Can you have real conversations that hold substance and weight?

3. Agape: A love that is based entirely on the goodwill of the giver. Literally, charity.

¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (Jn. 3:16)*

a. Agape is given without respect to the object’s ability to return that same level of love.

b. Only motive for God to love is found in God Himself.

i. God is Benevolent in his love.

c. God is the Giver and a supplier of this type of love.

i. Mankind is not capable of agape love (except the Father gives it to them).

d. Possible Questions

i. Does she love Jesus more than she loves me?

ii. Can we run after Jesus together?

iii. Can she get a prayer through in times of crisis?

iv. Can she speak the word of God over me in times of disappointment?

*Again, the only reason we date/court/etc. is to gather data?

B. Engage or Disengage

1. Once you’ve gathered sufficient evidence, make a choice and start moving in one of two directions.

2. Problem is that in our information gathering, we often gather too much information.

3. What if the church established a dating culture that is based on honor?

⁹ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (Rom. 12:9-10)*

a. Where we learn to honor each other in our searching.

b. Where we learn to protect each other in our waiting.

C. Enter into Covenant (Publicly)

1. Knowing that it's beneficial to include others to witness and hold accountable.
2. Knowing that it'll take the intercession of a community to maintain a gospel focus in the marriage.
3. Knowing that it will take Holy Spirit to live up to the standard.

III. Questions