

I. Intro

A. Series Overview

1. **Our Definition**: Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.
2. Various Relationship Levels in America
 - a. Single, *“Just a Friend”*, Seeing Someone, Dating, Going Steady, Serious, Engaged, Married
 - b. Problem: The Bible is silent about the Western custom of dating.
 - c. The Western dating scene has evolved into a private, spiritually dangerous exercise that we hope to survive.
 - d. We will spend 3-4 weeks discussing the covenant of marriage.
 - i. But we will start by walking with our brothers and sisters who have yet to enter a marriage relationship

B. The Dating Game (1): Released in 1965 (along with the “Newlywed Game”) on ABC.

1. The game allowed a woman to ask questions to 3 eligible bachelors(2) until time ran out.
 - a. The bachelors were hidden from sight and the woman had to make a decision (3) based on the information she acquired during this brief session.
2. Dating in America today is very much like The Dating Game.
 - a. The truth is often obscured.
 - b. Operating behind a wall with huge blind spots.

II. Singular Reason for Dating: Is this Your Spouse?

A. **Data Collection**

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1. Eros: Love that is based on feelings of arousal and physical attraction.
 - a. Make a quality decision on with your eyes.
 - b. Can he/she keep your attention?
 - c. **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?
 - b. Is that your best friend?

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)*

- i. Forsake all others?
 - c. Can you have real conversations that hold substance and weight?
 - d. Can you talk about anything without talking about yourselves?
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. (Mk. 10:8-9)*

- a. Agape is given without respect to the object’s ability to return that same level of love.
 - b. God is the Giver and a supplier of this type of love.

*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.

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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.

III. Choose Responsibly

A. The Dating Game (2): Independent Choice(s) Grounded in Isolation

1. **Ex:** Samson the Nazarite

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)

- a. Samson's moves were dictated by his own will and expertise.

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)

- b. The common single believer nowadays is much like Samson: Samson's chooser was broke!
- i. Samson made bad independent choice after bad independent choice.
- ii. And then... there was Delilah. (Judges 16:4-5)
- c. Instead of Samson's chooser getting more accurate and efficient with time and experience, it got worse.
- d. God still used Samson.

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- i. But it robbed him of some of his best days
 2. Like Samson, many of us have taken the Dating Game Approach
 - a. Making independent choices that are grounded in independence/isolation.

B. Love Connection (1): Choice that is Grounded in Community

1. Released in 1983 – 1995.
 - a. Renewed on Fox in 2017 (2)
2. A contestant was presented with limited information about 3 possible dates.
3. The contestant (3) chose who they wanted to spend time in person with, but their date was monitored.
 - a. The audience then gave their input and advised who they thought would be a good fit for the contestant.

C. A Biblical Option Immersed in Community (Isaac)

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.
2. Father (Abraham) knew him; studied him, was well-acquainted with his likes.
 - a. Isaac trusted his father so much that he submitted to his father's wisdom.
 - i. Even submitted to the idea of His father (Abram) delegating the assignment to the family servant, Eleazar.

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- b. Not the rule for successfully choosing a covenant partner for a lifetime.
 - i. But worth considering in this day and age.
 - 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. Virtuous woman.
- c. Isaac trusted those who were closest to him to help with his choosing, instead of relying on himself to do it.

IV. Conclusion:

A. Marriage is literally a covenant

Marriage: the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.

B. God gives great freedom and flexibility for how we land in this covenant.

C. Pastoral Advice

- 1. Recognize who God has placed in your life and include them into the process.
- 2. Two clear choices in the pursuing of a covenant commitment partner for a lifetime:
 - a. Samson
 - i. The Dating Game
 - b. Isaac.
 - i. The Love Connection

D. My Prayer is that God develops in us a culture that supersedes America's dating culture.

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