

Marital Check-up

Dating on Purpose



1 Corinthians 7:6-9

We're excited that you're here. So we've been going through a marriage series, but we haven't talked a lot about how you actually get married. So that is what we are going to do this morning. We are going to take a step back and talk about dating. Just so everybody knows, I am actually a dating expert. I'm sort of an expert on the topic, and I'll just kind of let you know the reasons why. I'll just get you one of my example dates that I pulled off one time to kind of let you know that I know what I'm talking about. So there was this girl in college that I thought was pretty cute. Her name was Katie. I thought I needed to try to get a date with this girl. So what I did was to decide to wait until Valentine's Day. That is the best day to call a girl and invite her on your first date. So I didn't have her number, so I went on the internet to Racer Touch and found her number off the internet. Some call that stalking; I just say it is using my resources, so I got her number. I knew her; I mean we had had a few conversations. So it wasn't just out of the blue. So I call her and say, "Hey Katie," and I kind of fumble around with some small talk, and then I invite her on the most epic date you can imagine. I say, "Katie, I want to invite you to go on a date with me tonight on Valentine's Day, and here is what we are going to do. We are going to go to Old School Wrestling at the Community Center of Hardin KY." Everybody knows if you want a girl to say yes, you invite her to go watch sweaty men in Spandex wrestle each other in Hardin KY! It's a sure thing; a sure winner! What I didn't know is what some of you probably know...it was probably not a really great offer for a first date—on Valentine's day—so Katie, who is now my wife, actually said no to the first time I asked her out. But, we did have some dates after that, and it led to marriage. So I do have that going for me. Then, for more than a decade, I

have dealt with teenagers and parents navigating through dating. So I've probably read more books and listened to more sermons, and thought about dating more than I could ever want to. That's just been my world for the last twelve years in Youth Ministry. Now that I'm out of that, I am back talking about dating to you guys! But what is really real now is I've got four kids of my own, who are probably all going to have to navigate dating. That scares me to death! It's like a whole new thought and depth of trying to figure out how to give them some good advice when it comes to dating. So when I was really studying through dating as a young Youth Pastor, dealing with the biggest issue in Youth Ministry, which is dating, and trying to figure this out, one of the things that shocked me about dating, (I remember first finding this out, and I was absolutely shocked) the shocker is dating is a modern phenomenon. It's a brand new invention. It's only been around for one hundred plus years. One hundred and twenty years is how long this thing, dating, has actually been around, been taking place. Latin, which dominated a lot of years, does not even have a word that translates into dating. If you went back two hundred years ago and asked some of your family members who are gone now who they were dating, they would look at you like, what are you talking about? What is that word? They would have no idea the category you are speaking of. It just didn't happen. I remember reading in the history of dating and I thought it was so fascinating. You could google "when did dating start?" Well, about the 1900's, we have this thing called dating that came about. So here is how dating kind of started. There is this thing called "calling." It was about the 1900's, and if a guy wanted to pursue a girl, he would go to her house and sit in her living room with mom and dad by his side. You could imagine there wasn't a lot of sexual immorality. It was all kind of leading towards marriage. This guy wasn't doing a lot with dad beside him cleaning the shotgun, right? It was very protected, and things were not going to happen until they were supposed to happen. But then, about the 1920's, things started to change a little bit. There were women's magazines starting to tell women how to get men. It started taking away the parental authority a little bit. Then guys and girls started meeting outside the home. They started going to dancehalls, clubs, and restaurants. Dating was just an individual thing that you could do outside of parent's watch. Then the

1930's happened. There was an invention called the car. The car changed dating forever. It revolutionized it. So now, you have the 30's, the 40's, and the 50's. If you've seen Greased Lightning, that is kind of the scene. You have guys going and picking up girls and paying a lot of money going on these dates. They are paying money for this girl to go on this date, buying her food, expecting things in the car to go a certain way. That is kind of the way dating was seen in the 50's. Then you have the 1960's where you have this kind of explosion happening. You have the feminist revolution, the sexual revolution, Playboy magazine, and the birth control pill. That all came out at the same time. So you can imagine this kind of exploded dating. Now you have sort of this sexual free-for-all. You have the pill that can be taken, so now women don't have to worry about children when it comes to dating. You have pornography that is on the rise. Everybody can see it; it's open; it's public. So now of course, this makes dating and sex very, very casual in the 1960's. Then you have the 1970's where you have abortions legalized, so if you do get pregnant, now you can get rid of the pregnancy. You have no-fault divorce, so if you make a bad choice, you can easily get a divorce and go pick another. So that's kind of where we have come over the last hundred years when it comes to dating.

Now, here we are in 2017. Here is dating: it usually starts at preschool, and then it goes to elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and then sometimes, post college you finally marry someone that you pick out of the hundreds of relationships that you've had. We actually have a TV show that kind of encapsulates this. It is called The Bachelor, or The Bachelorette. It is sort of how we do dating in a nutshell. I do not watch the show, by the way, but I know about the show. So here is what the show does, right, you have this guy who is looking for a girl. Do you bring twenty or thirty girls to him, and then they all date him, and he picks the one that meets all of his needs who is the hottest, who is going to make him feel the best. He picks the one that is best for his personal needs. He picks her and then marries, supposed to marry her. That is kind of dating in our culture. We just spread over a lot longer, right; it goes from grade school through college, but we have multiple different encounters, multiple different relationships, and then at the end of it, you pick the one that best

suits your needs, and you get married. Here we have The Bachelor, The Bachelorette; there has been thirty seasons of these shows, and so far, six of them are still together. Six out of thirty—if you're not good with math, is not good odds. That is like two in ten make it. That is not very well, but what do we do? Next season, we tune in because this is the only way we know how to find our soulmate; date a whole bunch of people and pick the one that best meets your needs, marry her or him, and live happily ever after. Well, there are usually problems with that. A lot of times, it ends in divorce and a new relationship because that one didn't meet your needs quite the way you thought it should. So here is kind of how we do of dating, and what we are going to purpose this morning is we think there is a better way to do this. We don't think The Bachelorette, the casual dating, recreational dating, dating for the fun of it, is the best way to find the person that God would have you spend your life with. So what we want to purpose this morning is to trade recreational dating, casual dating, and to trade it in for something called intentional dating, or dating on purpose. It is very simple. The big truth of this message is dating is for the purpose of marriage. So if you aren't ready for marriage, you are not ready for dating. It is kind of the big idea, and now we will kind of explore that, and give a lot of encouragement, actually, when you are ready for the season of dating.

So when we come to the Bible, where are we going to go? You can't look in the glossary for dating. The word is not going to be in here, it's only a hundred years old so the Bible doesn't address dating. But it does address singleness and singles when it comes to marriage. So we are going to go to 1 Corinthians 7 and we are going to hear from Paul as he gives us instructions for singles on how they should view and pursue marriage. Here is what we see in chapter 7:6-9. Paul says:

Scripture

"Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

(prayer)

Father God, we pray this morning that you would help us to see, not only how to date for the purpose of marriage, but also, the glory of singleness, knowing that we're not completed by another, but we are completed by You. But God, those of us who do desire marriage, I pray that we do it the right way so that we honor you all the way through, from dating into the covenant of marriage. We pray this in Jesus good name. Amen

Singleness

The first thing we are going to see is that sex and marriage is not everything. Now you've been coming to Hardin through this whole marriage series and you are like, ok, I guess marriage is everything. I guess I need to be married. I get it; I knew I should be married. Paul is going to say that is not true. Marriage is not everything. Marriage is not the highest good. There is actually something that is actually better than even marriage. So Paul says I really wish you could all just be like me. Paul was a guy who was called to singleness. He didn't have a wife. He was called to a life of singleness. He is talking to singles, and he says marriage is not the end all, be all. There is actually something better than marriage, and that is being single. Because if you are called to singleness, if you have a calling from the Lord to be single, you can actually use your singleness to glorify the Lord in a way that married people just can't. Husbands have to satisfy their wives, wives have to satisfy their husbands, and they have all the cares of them to think of. For a single person, it is I get to satisfy Jesus, I get to live in a relationship with Him, and I get to pursue His Kingdom above all else. So Paul is going to argue that actually marriage and sex is not the be all of all.

That is really good for our culture to hear because we live in a culture that tells you your sexuality is everything about you. And if you can't express it, if you can't enjoy how you want to, then that is actually something that is very damaging. That your rights are dependent on you getting to explore

your sexuality however you feel it needs to be explored, and if that is ever said no to, you are actually harming and damaging yourself. Paul would say no, that is not true; your sexuality is not all that you are, and marriage is not a thing that you absolutely have to have. You see, the Bible would say you are absolutely fully human and fully who He wants you to be as a single person. So you don't date to complete yourself. You are already complete if you are in Christ. You're complete in the Lord Jesus. You don't have to have somebody else to complete you. If that were true, then our Lord Jesus is not a complete person because He never had a romantic relationship. The Apostle Paul is not a complete person, John the Baptist is not a complete person. They lived an unfulfilled, meaningless life for God. Would any of us argue that? Absolutely not! But they didn't have a romantic relationship. They were called to singleness.

Why are you dating?

So, before you pursue dating, you need to ask yourself why you are pursuing dating. Is it out of a need, or is it out of a want? I'm going to argue that you don't need to date out of a need. If you are dating out of a need that says I must have this, if I don't get it I'm not going to be complete, or happy, and my whole life is going to be ruined; if that is your motivation, if you date out of a need of completion, then in dating you will be willing to sin against Jesus to get what you ultimately want and need. Which is a relationship that you are willing to cross boundaries and sin against God to get your ultimate idol, which is a relationship. That is dating from a need. But what we want to do on the other hand is to date out of a want. Paul says it's a good thing to want marriage. We should want marriage. It's a good thing; it is not a bad thing to want marriage. He says if you burn for passion and desire marriage, go for it, it's a good thing! But it is a want. It is a desire that's a good desire, but it's not something you have to have. And if you don't get it, you're still fully human. You can still live the life that God wants you to live. If you date out of a want, like I really want this, I'm going to look for somebody, I really want this, but I don't have to have it, then you will obey Jesus the whole time through your dating. And you won't disobey Him to get something that you ultimately

think you need. So when it comes to dating, date out of a want, not out of a need.

Are you called to singleness?

Now I want to read what Paul says again to the unmarried, to those in this room who are single. If you are married, please listen, because you know singles, you are raising singles, your grandkids are single. You know a lot of single people, so listen to what Paul says. "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am." It's great to be single! They should be cherished, elevated, and celebrated.

Singleness is a great season, don't miss it, but celebrate it, serve the Lord in it. And if you are called to forever singleness, it is a praiseworthy thing. It is a good thing to be single. Verse 9 says, "But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion." So if singleness is something that to you is something where I don't know if I can do; I desire a wife, I desire a husband. I've got passions, I've got desires, and they're burning; I need to be married. Paul says great, that's a good thing. God put that in you to lead you to marriage. But before you start pursuing that, before you start dating, I just want to ask the question. This is a pre-dating question; am I called to singleness? It's a great question to ask yourself, because Paul says I hope some of you college students are. I really hope some of you are called to singleness because we can use you for the mission field and the Kingdom like no other person we can use. Please, I'm hoping some of you have this calling as I have. It's a gift, very few have it, but it's a gift. So just ask the question, am I called to singleness? If you don't desire a wife, if you don't desire a husband, don't feel pressure by your parents, your church, to get one. Maybe God has called you to singleness, and that's a good and that's a glorious thing. So the first question is; am I called to singleness? Then pray through that, work through that.

But then for the rest of us who say huh uh, not me, I'm not called to singleness, I need to find a wife. That was me in college. I've got desires, I need a wife, so this is how for those of us who do desire marriage, what do we do? Well the cultural norm is usually to go through dating, which is what we are going to discuss. So hopefully, we will discuss it very

differently than how the culture portrays it. So again, trading casual, recreational dating for intentional, purposeful dating, dating for the purpose of marriage. So the first thing you do is start with two big questions.

1. Who?
2. When?

Two big questions that you need to ask before you start dating. You can do this in elementary school, middle school, high school, college, as a family. It's a good family talk, especially when your kids are small and they just start asking questions about boyfriends, girlfriends. Hey let's have a conversation. The question of 'who' gets to this: What kind of person do you want to marry? That's 'the who.' Who would you want to be married to? In this, I think there are two categories: non-negotiables and negotiables.

Non-negotiable

They need to be a believer. Non-negotiable, they need to be going somewhere with their life. Non-negotiable, they need to love missions because I'm going to be a missionary. Non-negotiable, they need to want kids because I want kids. So, it's whatever you see as, I can't compromise on this; I have to have these things in order to say yes to them. They have to have character; they have to have work ethic, those things, leadership. Some of those things that you say these are non-negotiable.

Negotiable

Then you have a list of negotiables. Man I would love it if my husband could dance. But you know if I find all these good things and he's not a dancer, that's ok. I can walk on that a little bit. Maybe you're a Racer fan, I mean, you love the Racers, and you meet someone who went to Austin Peay. Ahhh—that may be in the non-negotiable one. That's probably a negotiable, right, you can go to a game and she can wear that color and you can wear your color, and it's ok. That's a negotiable thing; it can be compromised a little bit. Make a list, and then when you do enter into the time of dating, date based on that list. It can change. It can morph a little

bit, but the paper list is probably going to do a better job than just your eyes seeing someone. When you see someone and they are cute, and they are hot, and you say, "aaah, yes, I love them!" Why? "I don't know; I just love them." Ok, let's go back to the list. "Do they have these things?" "I don't know." Yes, this is why you need some guidance from yourself, your family, and community to help you in this.

So ask 'who,' write it down, and then ask 'when.' This is the harder question, especially for young people, for teenagers. The question is this; when do you see yourself being ready for marriage? When is that time? Maybe for you it is out of high school is my 'when.' That's when I think I can get married, when I graduate from high school. Well if that's what you say, then when you have a boyfriend in grade school, that's probably not going to work out well. Because you've got grade school, middle school, high school of exclusively dating them, hanging out, spending a lot of time with them, guarantee crossing all sorts of lines with them to make it to graduation where you can finally get married. See, it's too long of a gap. What you don't need in dating is a long gap between I found them and I can marry them. You need a very short gap so that when you find them, it's a really quick path to I can marry them. So what I'm begging you to do is to think about your 'when.' If your 'when' is college, don't date in middle school, right. If your 'when' is after college, don't date your freshman year of college. Whatever your 'when' season is, start dating according to that. Because when you find them, you don't want to say oops, sorry, I kind of played with your heart and I know you love me a lot, but I'm way not ready for this. It's going to be like five years until we can actually do anything with this. So let's just do what everybody else does, let's live together, sleep together, hang out, all that stuff. Then probably break up and find somebody else, because this is not going to work out. So I'm urging you to date according to your 'when.' So if your 'when' is in college, then college would be a great time to start dating. And then during your grade school years, probably not; middle school, probably not; high school, probably not. Because if you found someone, you can't do anything with them that would please the Lord. So ask 'who' and 'when' and then date your 'who' according to your 'when.'

The next thing that we need to do is just to look at a verse that is going to kind of hang over our dating. I love this verse in Song of Solomon 8:4, it says, "I adjure you O daughters of Jerusalem that you do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." This is a wife who has just married Solomon. She's just gone into the chambers and they've had marriage, honeymoon, everything's exciting, she's begging her girlfriends to say love is awesome when it's ready, but don't stir up, don't awaken it until you're ready for this. Until you're ready for marriage, don't play with it. It's not something to play with. That's what we are going to beg for all of us. If you are single, don't play with love until you're ready for love.

So what are we going to say under this? I think there are three seasons that you are likely going to walk through. So if you are a parent, grandparent, single kid, middle schooler, or high schooler, these are kind of the seasons that I think you will find yourselves in.

Children-The season of sleeping

If you are a child, birth until puberty, you are in a season of sleeping. What we want for our kids is for them to be asleep to romantic feelings, asleep to boyfriends and girlfriends. We just want them to be asleep, to be aware, just to enjoy friendship with one another, and not worry about all these labels that we put on it. So what does this mean for us as a church? We have to stop asking our kindergarten kids who their boyfriend is, or who their girlfriend is. If you come up to one of my kids and ask them who their girlfriend is, it's not going to go well with me and you. We're going to go have a talk outside. They are sleeping right now! Crider doesn't need to be thinking through who is my girlfriend because he is so not ready for that season of his life yet. He needs to be completely asleep right now. If you are a parent and you have grade school kids, you know this is really hard to keep sleeping because when they go to school, it's like everything, right? Like last night, I'm preaching this sermon today, and last night Finley sang K-I-S-S-I-N-G. What are you singing! Hold on, where did you hear that? He's in Kindergarten, and he said well my best buddy is dating so and so; it's his girlfriend, and so we sing that song to them. I'm like, whoa! Hold on just a minute! We had to have a fifteen-minute conversation about what is dating, what is marriage, and how you do not need a girlfriend

until you're ready for marriage. Everybody understand, sons? Yes daddy. Ok, no more talk of that, no more song of that. You're sleeping right now. So we as parents and grandparents, I know it looks so cute; it's not cute. It's dangerous. They need to be sleeping right now. It's children, not aware of who I need to date because that is going to open something up that's going to be really hard to shut down when they're middle schoolers and high schoolers, and they're really ready for some of those things. We want to shut it down; we want them to be sleeping.

Teens-The season of preparing

This is the teenage years. This is a very hard stage for teenagers because teenage thinks this is the season to go. It's not; it's a season to prepare. What we're going to beg you to do during this season is, instead of playing with love, we want you to prepare for love. Big difference...Don't play with love during your teenage years, but instead, prepare for love. I love what Dr. Muller told us at a high school retreat one time. He said, "Puberty is not a toy to be played with; it is a tool to mature by." What we do often with our teenagers, whenever they are awakened up, because they will wake up, you don't have to wake them up. One day your boys will realize girls don't have cooties, they are actually kind of cuties, and they'll want to be with them. They'll wake up, and when they wake up, what they need to know is you don't have a toy to play with. This is not, I've got these feelings, so I'm going to go date a bunch of girls and do a lot of things, and grab their hearts, and give my heart away, and break it up, and just have a fun, recreational ten years of play. No, that's not what you want. What you want is for your sons and your daughters, when they have those feelings, to realize they have a tool that is pointing towards something. And that tool is they've been given this privilege to be mothers and fathers, and husbands and wives, and you want during that awakening for them to realize I have a tool. It's time for me not to play; it's time for me to mature, because when I get to the season when I'm ready for marriage, I want to be ready. So when I get to be a high school graduate, I'm a man who is capable to be on my own, is capable to take on a family, and is capable to be a guy who could say yes if I found the right girl. So this is a time of maturity, not a time for playing. In our culture, it's very hard for

teenagers to mature during these times. I mean, think about it. Just one hundred, two hundred years ago when a kid was thirteen, he either got a family, a job, or he went to war. Those were the three things you did as a thirteen year old. What have most of our thirteen year olds do now? It's still like video games and playtime, hang out for a lot of years. What we've got to do as parents is say, ok, hold on, we've got to actually train our young boys and young girls how to mature. That at that age of awakening, dads, it's time to take sons and say hey, guess what? It's time to become a worker; it's time to have a job under me, or outside the home. It's time for you to start having responsibility. It's time for you to be building character and becoming a man, because one day I'm going to launch you out of this house as a man, not a boy. It's moms, when you have that awakening with your little girls, it's telling them that hey, this is a signal that one day God might have in your plans to be a mother and a wife. So I'm going to take you under my wing and I'm going to prepare you for that. It's moms teaching your daughters how to be like you. Not just let them play all the way through middle school and high school, but it's preparing them, it's teaching them God has a plan for your life, and it might include a spouse. It may be called to singleness, but I'm going to help you to mature during these years. So the teen years...it's not years for dating and playing; it's years for maturing. Not playing with love, but preparing for love.

Young Adults-The season of looking

Moving on, I want to get to the next section. When it comes to young adults, we have a lot of young adults here thinking how do I do this, what do I do as a young adult? I think young adults are the season of looking. So as a young adult, you've had the season of preparing, hopefully, so now it's the season of looking.

So three things to guide you is first, you want to open your eyes to people around you. So you're a young man or a young woman, you're ready for marriage, you're entering into that season. What is step number one? You need to open your eyes. Look around at potential 'whos' that are around you. Church is a great place to look for this. Maybe even put yourself in some spaces. I did youth ministry for a long time, and a lot of our youth leaders ended up getting married. Why? Because they are serving the Lord

together, they are seeing you love the Lord, I love the Lord; I see your character, I see who you are, and then it led into a marriage that came out of this. So maybe if you are single and looking and can't find anyone, join a ministry of the church maybe you'll find one there. Chris Allen will give you his number after this, and you can go right there. It's a great place to try and find someone. Open your eyes! Look around at my church, look around at my friends, look around at my school; who do I see that has godly character? Who do I see that I might be not looking at that might be a potential who?

Then secondly, pursue them with prayer. So pursue that person with prayer. So guys, it's actually initiating, right? Find the number online like I did. Initiate, go up to them, and start a conversation. Try to get to know them a little bit. Actually invite them on a date, not like on Facebook Messenger, but like call them, talk to them. Hey, I'm an alive person, not a digital world; I'm here, I'm real. Let's go and go on a date, let's try this. So it's initiating. So look around and then prayerfully pursue. I want to talk to the girls for just a moment because I think when I hear a lot of young ladies I think we have some misinformation. Because I think for girls, they are so afraid to pursue a guy. We think about in a perfect world, it is more appropriate for the guy to pursue and the girl to respond. It's going to give a better picture of marriage. But we guys need some help sometimes. We're not very wise and smart. We are kind of like, uhhh...we don't get signs very well. So I think for some of you girls who are single, I'm not saying just go pursue a guy, but I think you can be a little more like Ruth sometimes. Do you know what Ruth did if you read it? She actually put herself in Boaz's way. She actually made herself noticeable to Boaz. The Bible doesn't condemn that. That's what happened. So I think for you ladies, if you see a guy who could be a 'who,' I think it's perfectly fine for you to put yourself in his way, to make yourself noticeable. I'm not saying like go stalk him and call him, and knock on his door. But I think you can make yourself where you're saying hey, if you're interested, I'm here. I know for Katie, she told one of her girlfriends that she thought I was cute. Which led to her girlfriend telling me she thought I was cute, so I was like ok. You see, I'm thick; I need signs. I need something going on, "oh hey, let's go for this one." And it led to me pursuing her. She's not chasing me,

but she's just saying suddenly hey, I am available. So don't be Proverbs 7 woman where you seize him with a kiss and then rope them into the bedroom. Do not do that! But I think it is appropriate to be like Ruth and just to make yourself available. Put yourself in the way of a godly guy who you think you would like for him to pursue you. Just let the ball fall, and if it's taken up and run with, great, if not, then that's ok as well. So pursue with prayer.

Lastly, date on purpose. Make sure you're dating with the purpose of marriage. Now I don't mean on the first date, like when you get your Coke and they get their water, "alright, let's talk about this marriage thing. So where is this going, we need to know. Is this going for marriage?" "Uh, I don't know!" I'm not saying do that on the first date, but what I am saying is on the first date, in the back of your mind, you need to ask this question: Is this somebody that I could potentially marry? If the answer is no, then you don't need to have a second date. Yeah, but he's cute, and this could be fun. It doesn't matter. If it's not listing on some of your 'whos' then there is no second date because there's no purpose. You're not dating just for the fun of it; you're dating for the purpose of marriage. So on your first date, it's not that marriage comes out on the first date, but it's you're thinking through already that the reason we're doing this is for marriage. So if this is not marriage potential, we're not going to waste our time just causally dating and pleasing each other just for our own sinful pleasures. No, we're going to say no to this and then see if another person comes along.

So, two biblical don'ts when it comes to dating, these are biblical do nots. They should be kind of cut and dry as far as biblical goes. The first is sexual immorality, Ephesians 5:3, and the second is dating a nonbeliever, 2 Corinthians 6:14. So those are two clear biblical don'ts. So don't sin during your dating, and if you are in sin during your dating, you're not pleasing the Lord. You need to seek out counsel and probably break up. That's don't do sexual immorality while dating, and then secondly, don't date a nonbeliever. You say, "But he's coming to church now." It doesn't matter. He needs to be a believer. He needs to love Jesus first before you continue that dating relationship.

So those were do nots, now I want to close with eight wise suggestions for your dating, wise suggestions for your dating. When I used to do youth talks on dating, it was really easy. It was basically, hey you're not ready, so don't do it. Now it's like, hmm, I've got some young adults in here who are actually like ready for marriage. So I had to rethink on my whole talk because I've got to give some things for them to actually do as they date. So here's going to be my eight suggestions to you guys on what to do when it comes to actually dating, actually finding someone and then marrying them.

1. Look past their charm and see their character.

So when you're dating, look past their charm and see their character. Proverbs 31:30 says, "Charm is deceitful." In other words, it's a liar; you can't trust it. "...and beauty is vain." It's going to flee. They are going to get old with you. "...but a woman that fears the Lord is to be praised." So the writer of Proverbs is saying look past charm, look past beauty; those things are good things, maybe attracted you to that person, but you've got to look past those and you have to get down to their character. Because if you only focus on charm, only focus on beauty, then you could get married and realize you made a mistake because their character is horrendous. But it's too late at that point, so look past their charm. Anybody can be charming, anybody can put on a good face, but look at their character. Ask 'who' questions; ask their story. Tell me your testimony; tell me how you found Jesus. Tell me what He's been doing in your life. Get to the character questions. Ask his friends, ask her friends, ask their church. Get to those deeper root level questions. What are you doing with your life? Where do you want to go? Ask those things that get to not just, hey you're cute and I would like to spend time with you. No, get to those 'who' questions that you've written down so that you look past charm and you get down to their character.

2. Date in community, not in isolation.

Date in community, not in isolation. What do I mean by this? When you find someone that you want to start pursuing, don't do it in isolation in secret from all of your friends, church, and parents. That's the worst thing

to do. Instead, you need to pursue this person in the community of the church, in the community of your friends, and in the community of your family, so that other people are watching, other people have their eyes open. They are seeing you two together, because if you ladies find a guy and he's always pursuing in isolation away from everybody else, he can be anybody you want him to be. But when it comes to pursuing him around his friends, your friends, your church, and your family, all of a sudden, he can't hide at all those points. No, his character comes out; how he interacts with people. Things that you do notice come out; your friends will start to say, "Um, I don't know if he's really right for you." "Oh yeah, he's so cute!" "I know, but let's look at these things. These things aren't good." "Oh yeah, I kind of overlooked that." You need to run because he's not who you think he is, or she's not who you think she is. So date in community. Have them around the church, around friends, around your family; those kind of things so other people are weighing in on if you guys are compatible, if you guys are going to work, and if you need to run or need to stay. So do it in community, not in isolation. Because in isolation, you can be anybody, they can be anybody, but it's in community with other people that it helps to see who they really are.

3. Delay and diminish physical affection.

This is what JD Greer says, and I think it's absolutely wise counsel, delay and diminish physical affection. Just a Song of Solomon verse, chapter 1 verses 2 and 4, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;" "Draw me after, let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers." So here are these two people; they ran to the chambers of their marriage bed, and what was the thing that just came before that? Let him kiss me. What does kissing do? Kissing starts the engine that revs up that leads somewhere. So if you're in a romantic relationship and think we can just make out a lot, that's not going to go well. Because when you do that, it's an engine that's starting, it's cranking, it's leading somewhere, and Solomon said it's supposed to lead here. And if you are in a dating relationship, romantically involved, and you start crossing lines of affection, start being physically affectionate towards one another, then all that's going somewhere and it's really hard to control it

and stop it. So what you should be doing now is diminish and delay physical intimacy, and instead, focus on who they are spiritually. What's their personality? Who are they psychologically? Do you connect to things outside of just physical? Because I'm telling you, physical touch impairs all judgment. It's just a judgment killer! Like you can be in a relationship with somebody that we are like why are you dating them? Well we know why, because you are physical together. And in physical, all judgment is impaired, and you don't need your judgment to be impaired. You need to be able to see clearly, to think clearly about them. So delay and diminish the physical and just rally around that we're brothers and sisters in Christ. So what a brother and sister would do, that's what we're going to do until we get married and your sister becomes your bride, and then it's a new relationship. But if you're dating for the purpose of marriage, then marriage is not that far off. If you think about are you really telling me I can't kiss somebody I'm dating? Well if you're in middle school and you're thinking about that, it's really hard because you aren't getting married for fifteen years. But if you could possibly be married in like six months, it's actually not that odd of a possibility. Imagine if our first kiss was our marriage, our wedding day. That would be awesome. But it's so close it could actually happen! So just diminish and delay physical intimacy and that will keep you from a lot of temptations.

4. Be private in public.

My dad would always say this whenever he gave a dating talk. It's really good wisdom; be private in public. What do I mean by that? For me and my wife, we spent a lot of nights at Huddle House. It used to be in Murray, open 24/7, which was great because a lot of college life was late at night. So instead of going to her dorm room, which would have probably been very bad, we went to Huddle House. We're at a booth, we're talking, just me and her. The whole world is gone. I'm ignoring everyone else; it's just us two. We are absolutely private. We are in deep conversation for hours and hours over a lot of coffee and pancakes, but there were other people in the room. Like, things can't happen, or the cops are going to get called or something. We are in public! The lines can't be crossed in public. So what I would say is in your dating, do the best that you can to be always

private in public settings. Go for a hike, walk across the bridge. There are so many great opportunities, go for coffee, have dinner, or hang out with friends. But you can be private, and it doesn't just have to be in private. It can actually be in public.

5. Set clear boundaries together.

So this is probably not like first date talk, but as you start spending time together and you are exclusive. Like ok, we're dating; then you need to have some clear boundaries. Here are some things we're not going to do. We're not going to be alone. We're not going to, whatever your list is. We're not going to get into romantic kissing because we know where that's going to go. We're not going to sit on the couch alone together and watch movies in the dark at 12:00 because the movie will get less interesting than you. It's probably going to happen, so we're going to set boundaries so that you don't put yourself in a situation you are unprepared for. We're going to set boundaries upfront with each other, and then we are going to hold each other to those boundaries.

6. Put your phone down.

This is really helpful in dating. Put your phone down or leave it somewhere else. I can't tell you how many restaurants I go into, and you guys have seen it to, there is a date, a couple, it's just them two, and what is happening? Nothing there, it's just a screen and a thumb, and that's all that's going on. It's like the girl is taking pictures of her food and Snapchatting it to all of her friends, telling them how good the date is. The guy is looking through Twitter watching a game, talking about how good the food is and the date is. They are telling everybody how great the date is, but if you were actually there, the date is really lame. Nothing is going on here. So if you are dating a person, please, just for the sake of I don't want to walk into the restaurant and make a scene, put your phone down! Put it in your pocket. This goes for all of us at restaurants, just put it in your pocket. When you have a phone out, on the table, or in your hand, you're saying, you are kind of important, but I have way more important things to do. And any beep that this thing makes; it's way more important than you are. So if you're on a date and someone can't look at you

because they are on their phone, run as fast as you can! Just leave right then, just go, because I promise you, it will not get better. If you can't hold their attention at dinner on a first or second date, you're not going to hold their attention when you're married and the kids have just gone to bed. They are going to go straight to their phone, and they are going to ignore you the rest of their life because they've got better things to do. So make sure that you know this person is into me. They have a priority of me, and that includes putting the world on pause so that we can actually engage each other, talk to each other, and to get to know each other. So when it comes to a date, put the phone down and be together. Get to know one another. Don't just tell the world about how great the date is.

7. Get parents involved early.

I beg you; get parents involved early. If you watch a movie, what happens? The guy goes through all the relationships and he finds the one, he proposes to her, and then the big scene of taking her to meet mom and dad. What? How is that ever a good idea to bring your engaged person home to mom and dad? Shouldn't that have happened a long time ago? Because who knows you better than your mom and dad? Not very many people. So you don't want your mom and dad to be brought in on the very end of the thing when there's no chance of telling you, hey, this person's not compatible with you whatsoever. Bring them in on the very front end of the deal. Not like first date, hey, come and have dinner with my mom. That would probably be a little awkward. But as things are progressing and you're sensing, hey, this might lead to marriage, then take them to mom and dad! Go hang out with your parents so that they can see them as they relate to you, because nobody knows you better than mom and dad. They can speak words into you, and they can kind of say this probably isn't a good idea. I think it's why arranged marriages used to have so much success, because your mom and dad could probably pick a better suiter than you can. That's why Evie Kate is having an arranged marriage. I haven't told her that yet, but she'll find out. I can do better than she can, I promise, so that's what we're going for. But get your parents involved early because they have wisdom that you need to heed.

8. Don't delay the big day.

Don't delay the big day. If you've done dating right, you're dating only in the season when you're actually ready for marriage. Then when you find the person, then you don't have to wait three years to plan a wedding. You don't have to wait four years until you get your perfect career, your perfect life, your perfect house, and then, you'll add them to your life that's already established. But no, when you find the person and you are ready for marriage, then don't delay that big day. I mean, you've already sought counsel, people are speaking, this isn't like the third date, ask her to marry you and run to the courthouse. You've been doing it right. You've been pursuing counsel, mom and dad are involved, the church is involved, leaders are involved, and friends are involved. Everybody has seen you. There's been enough to get to know their character, not just their charm. But within a reasonable time of dating them and proposing to them, then don't delay the big day forever. Ladies, you don't need a year to plan your wedding. I promise, you'll be better to have a really lame wedding and obey Jesus the whole way through and go to the courthouse than to have the biggest wedding you could imagine and sin against Jesus the whole way through and start your marriage on the wrong foot. Your wedding is one day; your marriage is hopefully going to be until death do you part. So don't delay it forever when you find the person you're ready in that season that you should have been waiting to date anyway. When you find them, don't delay that day forever.

Just in closing, let me tell you what I've told a lot of teenagers, and what I'll tell my kids one day. It's always made them mad, but that's ok. When they always get frustrated with this, I'll say this, "Look, I could care less if you have really good dating relationships. I don't care. I don't care if you have ten awesome dating relationships. That does not concern me whatsoever. I don't care how great your dating is, here is what I want. I want you to have one great marriage. That's what I'm going for. That's what I want, not made a whole career of fifteen years of dating everybody that was so fun. No, I want you to have one really, really, great marriage that is going to last, going to fulfill you, and that is going to glorify God and will picture Christ and the church. So that's my goal for you. That's our

church's goal for you. So in that, you can't date the way culture dates with endless, casual relationships, hookup, breakup, and repeat. You can't do it like that. Dating is not recreational. Dating is for the purpose of marriage. So date when you're ready for marriage. And then date rightly; looking for your 'who,' not just whoever you think is cute at the moment. Date for your 'who,' because you're dating in your 'when.' So that when you do get married, you can glorify God with your marriage.

I know there was a lot of information, really quick. Hopefully, some of that sank in and gave you a little bit of encouragement as a single, but also as moms, dads, grandparents, church body; we need to help the singles from preschool all the way through, because the world's got a really bad vision for dating and marriage. We need to have a better vision, and remembering, dating and marriage; it's not the biggest thing. There is something actually better than marriage, and that is the gospel of Jesus. So I want to make sure we date and we marry in a way that ultimately gives glory to that.