Dating Seminar

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Preacher: Edward Kang

[0:00] All right. So starting off with singleness. When singleness is mentioned in the beginning of scripture, God sees Adam's singleness, and he says it is not good. It is not good that man should be alone.

He says, I will make a helper fit for him. And so he creates Eve for Adam in marriage. So at the start of the Bible, singleness is viewed unfavorably, so much so that marriage is actually needed. It's a needed solution to the problem.
However, in the New Testament, in Matthew 22, Jesus makes it clear that in the bodily resurrection with Christ in heaven, we will neither marry nor be given in marriage and will be like the angels.
All right. So where before God intervened and fixed this broken singleness issue, now in heaven, it's seen as normal, good, appropriate.
So what gives? Why is there such a remarkably different stance towards singleness in heaven? It's ultimately because, right, our spiritual marriage to Christ. Ephesians 5 frames our messy, sinful, horizontal marriages as husband and wife as just a glimpse, a picture of our love-filled, perfect, vertical marriages with Christ, right, with Christ and his church.
[1:30] That though she has been promiscuous, she's been unfaithful like Gomer, the faithful husband like Hosea, he's pursued his bride, even when it cost him his own life.

Even though we, none of us, none of us deserve to wear white on that day, he has bought us our gown, he's washed it in his blood. And so on that day, on that glorious wedding, we will sing, let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made her ready.
This is the reason why this shift in singleness happens, because everything that our horizontal marriages points to is now been fulfilled in our marriages with Christ.
But this shift in the evaluation of singleness doesn't occur just in heaven. In fact, it's already happened. Paul says so in 1 Corinthians 7, where he writes to a people written in the same redemptive era as us between the two comings of Christ, right?
And there are a couple places where he remarkably notes the value of singleness. In verse 7, he says, I wish that all were as I myself am, meaning happily single for the Lord.
[2:48] Verse 8, to the unmarried and to the widowed, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. Verse 38, so then he who marries his betrothed does well.

And he who refrains from marriage will do even better. Again, just note the stark contrast between Genesis. It is not good.
It is not good for the man to be alone. To Paul's now, he who refrains from marriage will do even better. And why is it better for Paul?
You will be free from anxiety, he says. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife and his interests are divided.
That's verses 32 to 34. Have you ever noticed? I'm sure you guys have noticed when you guys attend our Wednesday prayer meetings, right? It's mostly singles.
[3:51] It's mostly people who have the time and the luxury to be able to come. I'm literally guilty of this, right? I'm not saying that it's good or right, but it is just natural.

Married people, especially with kids, are naturally divided and distracted because of their home duties. There is a unique value and privilege that a single person has in his or her capacity to serve the Lord and to serve his people.
Sam Albury, a faithful pastor who models godly singleness, he shared a story about how there was an elderly member of his congregation. He needed someone to take care of him, right?

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He needed a caretaker. And his wife, the usual caretaker, needed to travel somewhere else to attend to some other business for a month. No one else in the entire church could just drop everything at home and go and live with this man and go help this man.
No one but Sam. So Sam went and lived with this man, serving him, taking care of him, making the most out of the flexibility and the ability, the capacity he has to serve uniquely.
[5:06] I think this is such a beautiful picture of how precious and how effective singleness can be in the kingdom of God. So my whole point is that singleness is not automatically a curse or a deficiency that immediately needs to be fixed by dating, by marriage.

But really, so often we treat it like a curse. There are different ways you could define biblical wisdom. But one that's been sticking with me as of late is a simple premise.
Just to see life, see the world the way that God sees it. Not to be influenced by our cultural presuppositions. You know, the risk of teaching a dating seminar is potentially to fall into that cultural trap, right?
That singleness is automatically bad. And that everyone here who's single, right? You better get busy. You better start going on dates, get married, have kids.
I am by no means denigrating those things, right? I am pro-marriage and pro-family. But I'm also pro-singleness. Because the Bible is unapologetically pro-singleness.
[6:22] After all, Jesus, Paul, John the Baptist, they were all single. That being said, 1 Corinthians 7 is not a blanket statement of pro-singleness.

I want to make that clear. Instead, it's a pro, a very specific type of singleness. To those verses above, here are the rest of the verses, right?
Singleness is better if you have the gift of singleness. The rest of verse 8. To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it's good for them to reign 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. If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes.
Let them marry. It is no sin. So then he who marries his betrothed does well. And he who refrains from marriage will do even better. Paul veers to encourage some singles to remain single, right?
[7:32] While others, he encourages to marry. And who are those people? Those who struggle with self-control in sexual purity who burn with passion.

Those who are distracted in their singleness because they are constantly longing for marriage. And I think that that is actually the majority of us.
While scripture is pro-singleness, it's also clear that the biblical norm is to get married. In the pastoral qualifications for elders, they always say husband of one wife.
You see that in 1 Timothy 3. You see that in Titus 1. It's not that marriage is an explicit requirement for eldership. But it's naturally assumed that these men would be married.
That was the natural and normal assumption. In Matthew 19, after Jesus raises the bar for divorce and remarriage, The disciples said to him, If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.
[8:38] And Jesus said to them, Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. But only those to whom it is given. The reality is, I think most of the singles in our church should pray and seek to be married.

Given that the Bible teaches that singleness is the exceptional and honorable calling for those who can receive it. But that marriage is the norm.
Most of us should probably think about getting married. And to help you think through whether I have the gift or not, the gift of singleness or not, I put together this simple decision tree.
It starts with a simple diagnostic question. Do you want to be married? Do you not want to be married? Andreas Kossenberger, an NT scholar, wrote a great book, God, Marriage, and Family. In that, he said that if you fear you have the gift of singleness, it probably means you don't have it. You can all take a deep breath. And I agree with him.
[9:51] Second question, are you self-controlled in your singleness? Are you taking advantage of your singleness in serving the Lord and his people? Right?

Second question, so if yes, then great. It seems like you might have the gift of singleness. We need faithful examples of you, of people like you in our church.

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You are a living example of what we'll all be like in heaven. Single, horizontally, but married vertically to Christ. So remain faithful to the Lord in your singleness until things change, right? Things could change. Maybe circumstances change and your desires change. But as long as you are content in your singleness, continue to serve the Lord in that way.
If you are not sure, let's say that you're generally self-controlled in your battle against lust. You're generally taking advantage of the unique privilege of being single, serving the Lord, serving his people.
[10:59] But you're not very sure if you want to be single for the rest of your life. Because again, Paul says that it's better to remain single. I think we should err towards that direction.

I think you should try to remain single, right? Try pursuing faithfulness in singleness to see if you can live that life in contentment and self-control.
And over time, God should provide more clarity. And I want to, again, correct our cultural presuppositions here. I think your parents, the people around you, everyone, if you're not sure, the natural instinct will be for, of course, you've got to get married.
You've got to start dating. But I want to put pause on that and help us to think biblically about what singleness really looks like. If no, let's say you're not content in your singleness, you're struggling to be self-controlled, and you're positive you want to be married, then, of course, let it be.
Though contented, servant-oriented singleness is better than being married, it is no sin to marry. In fact, Paul rebukes false teachers who prohibited marriage.
[12:11] I think I have a slide of that, right? It's these false teachers who prohibit marriage unnecessarily. That's not true. That's a false teaching. So it's a good thing to get married.

If you know that you don't have the gift of singleness, then, which I, again, think as most Christians today, then we ought to do two things.
We have to fight for contentment and self-control, and secondly, pursue marriage. Just because you might not have the gift of singleness is no excuse for you not to pursue contentment, wholehearted contentment in the Lord.
You might need to fight harder for it, but contentment and self-control are made available to all people, even in unwanted singleness. With Jesus, we can learn the secret of facing plenty, facing hunger, abundance, and need.
We can do all things through him who strengthens us. Such an important passage in Philippians 4. But even while you are content in the Lord, you can still work towards marriage.
[13:26] Contentment is not a spiritual exercise in kidding yourself. Contentment doesn't destroy your ability of distinguishing what you want and what you don't want.

Paul said that he learned how to be content, but it's not like he pretended that hunger and need are the exact same. Hunger and plenty of abundance are the exact same.
Hunger and need are not good places to be necessarily. It's impossible to be content in the Lord in the midst of persecution, but that doesn't mean that you should stay in persecution.
Maybe a helpful analogy there. So then, pursue marriage. In our specific time and culture, that's typically done through dating. By definition, the purpose of dating is to seek clarity on one simple question.
Am I going to get married to this person? That's the basic question you're just asking. It's not to follow the pattern of this world, to date just to have fun, or to find our ultimate joy in another person, or to create these pseudo-marriages that actually have no commitment in them.
[14:40] If dating is all about marriage, then, realistically, we ought to wait. To wait to date until you are ready to marry.

So the first step in pursuing marriage, I think, is to self-evaluate. Am I realistically ready to handle everything that marriage entails? Do I see myself getting married within the next 18 months?
That might seem quick for some of you, and it's by no means a legalistic rule. Every couple is different. Some are going to date shorter and longer. Some engagements will be shorter and longer.
But I think you can absolutely determine whether you're going to marry somebody and plan a wedding within 18 months. When you self-evaluate yourself for marriage, your readiness for marriage, understand that none of us are ever going to arrive of perfect readiness.
The bar is not sinless perfection. But there are wise and concrete questions that I think you can ask yourself to evaluate whether you are prepared to take that step forward.

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[15:54] I think the first question is, can I provide financially for a family? Am I independent from my parents? Given that marriage means that you leave from your parents and you cleave to one another and you start an independent family, your ability to provide for a family matters.

And I think this question particularly pertains to the guy. Given the Bible's consistent teaching on male headship in the family, I think it is primarily the male's, the guy's responsibility to be able to provide for their family.
It doesn't mean that you need to make a lot of money to take your family on fancy vacations. It doesn't mean that you also can't marry if you're in grad school. But you should have the means and or a plan to provide basic provisions for a family, including the prospect of kids.
Number two, am I a recent convert? I would generally advise newly converted Christians to wait. To wait before immediately jumping into dating and to marriage.
There is so much value in your singleness to devote your time in growing your relationship with the Lord. Number three, am I a member of a church in good standing?
[17:13] If you are a member not in good standing, i.e. under church discipline, there are far more important issues at hand than for you to get married, to think about getting married.

So you ought to address those areas of your life first before you introduce someone else into the equation. Number four, are there destructive addictions slash patterns in my life that control me? What? Oh, thank you. Uncontrolled addictions to things like pornography, gambling, alcohol, drugs, and or shopping, they ought to be addressed before you jump into dating.
I do think that marriage is a provision from the Lord to help our battle against lust. And I don't think you need to wait until you're at a point where you're 100% lust free and that you never ever struggle with lust.
But if you are watching porn regularly, if you are enslaved to it, I think it would be wise to pursue freedom before inviting again someone else into your life.
[18:28] I'm happy to talk about that more after. At the end of the day, it's both impossible and unwise to lay down exacting, determinative parameters of what it means to be ready for marriage.

So much of it is case by case, I think. Right? I think this is where the community around you is so helpful. Ask your friends, parents, pastors, Christian mentors, whether they see you getting married. If you are single and you are seeking to get married, you do well to seek their brutally honest feedback. Invite that into your life. Humbly receive that feedback and be open both to their challenges and to their encouragement.
So let's say you're willing and able to get married. So what's next? Well, I want to try doing something interactive so it's not just me talking for an hour and a half.
I want us to read together the best book written on dating. And it's the Bible. The Bible has a lot to tell us about how we are to date.
[19:41] So I want us to do breakout sessions, get into an exercise here. We're going to break out into groups of four to five, right, with the people around you. We're going to read through Genesis 24, 1 to 33.

And see if you can identify some applications from this story about how we are to date today. It's a story about how Abraham's servant goes and finds Rebecca for Isaac.
I want you to try to find the OIA method if you ever heard of that, right, observation, interpretation, application. We're going to ask simply good questions about the text and observation. What does a text say?
These are some examples of what you can look for. You probably don't need to get into all this. It's kind of complicated but the basic question is what does a text say? Interpretation is once you make an observation about the text you have to interpret it, right?
So what does a text mean? And then finally, application, we want to make that bridge between their cultural time, that writing, to what does this mean for me?
[20:47] How does this text apply for me? And so we're going to do this all around dating. What are some applications we can bring out of this text for dating? Okay?

So I'm going to give you guys 10 minutes, form your groups on your own, read through the text, and try to come up with some applications, observations, interpretations, applications, and then we're going to share them all together as a group.
Make sense? So who wants to go first? Okay, let's go. So, the story starts off, set out because the scripture talks about not marrying a Canaanite woman.

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Yeah. And the reasons for that was because in this context and time, the Canaanites were not worshippers of the only. Yep.
So. And what's the application? The application is that as single people, we should only be seeking out relationships, dating, marriage, with the fellow Christians.
[21:46] Absolutely. No option. Yep. There's no compromise on that. Spot on. Yeah. That's really good. It's a great Oya. Yeah. Next. Tell me.

Um, yeah. So, when the man was, like, scoping out the deal, I guess, like, he takes a lot of attention. Like, he doesn't just, like, wait for God to do something.
He looks around, he sees a girl, and he does, like, some evaluation. Yep. Like, is she generous? And then after that, she does a second screening. Like, is she pretty? Sure.
Like, it takes a lot of thoughtfulness on both men. Absolutely. Like, like, I have, we were kind of confused on, like, the braces and the ring and stuff, and maybe it's, like, a signal that the families, like, blow off.
Because then the guy was, like, here's a rock. You wouldn't be able to be, like, this guy actually giving you anything. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Here's a ring pop, not a ring. That's really good.
[22:48] Thanks for sharing. Next. Yeah, Lena. So, yeah. So, Dylan's way out that verse 21 says that the man gave to her in silence that whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not.

And this is after he asked God for a sign. God basically gave the sign, but he was, like, okay, I'm just going to wait a little bit to make sure that this is, you know, this is actually. And the other thing is, like, prayer was called a lot.
Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. And the obvious application is that we should be prayerful in our dating pursuit of marriage for sure. That's really good. Jason? Our group talked about how, just how many people were involved in, I guess, the worship between Isaac and Rebecca, specifically their families.
Yeah. So I think that kind of reflects, like, you should, you talked about involving your community and both community and both community and both community and you should trust everything.
Absolutely. That's really good. Tony kind of touched on it, but I'm going to fully try to explore it more.
Sure. Just Rebecca's humbleness to, like, be able to come up and be, like, they don't know, she doesn't know who these people are, but be able to offer water to the camels and then offer a place with them to stay and show just sheer humility in who she is and how we should all act.
[24:04] No matter who it is that might come into our lives, because God has a plan for us. Yeah. That's really, really good. Yeah. Any group that hasn't gone? Yes.

Anything you see that hasn't been shared already? Yeah. Verses 26 to 27, the servant keeps breaks. Yeah. I figured it shows the person that he found and the eventual marriage is how it's all a different couple.
Yeah. Yeah. That's really good. Yeah. It's related to what Connor said, but I think there's something to be said that first he noticed her appearance and then he evaluated her inner appearance or inner attractiveness, I guess.
Yeah. And so I think that's just like a good thing that we should, you know, I guess kind of both in a way. Sure. Because they're both going to be relevant to you as you get like a growing relationship.
For sure. Yeah. That's good. Any group that hasn't gone? Yeah. You have the toughest assignment. We were talking about how like the servant's prayer, like asking God for a sign.
[25:20] It was really bold because he was putting God to the test. So I think we were saying that it could be the same prayer but it really just depends on the heart posture. Yeah. Like one could be like a genuine like God I need to sign I need clarity and then one could be putting God to the test.

Yeah. Yeah. That's really good. What would it look like to put God to the test? Like that situation.
I don't know what you're saying about it. Yeah. Yeah. Are there a couple things that come to mind? I think if your posture is that I'm waiting for a pie in the sky message for this girl's name to be written in the clouds for me to go pursue her, I think that is representative of a heart that's not taking the initiative.
I think you guys are capturing what I was trying to see, what I saw in the passage where there is a humble dependence totally on the Lord in prayer, but there's also male-led initiative, right?
That Abraham sends his servant, the servant goes and seeks, he runs, right? There's a lot of running in this passage. God's eyes. And so I think if your position is that I'm not going to do anything unless I receive this certain sign that's, you know, this clear, then I think that probably

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represents a heart that's not trusting the Lord and testing him instead.
[26:52] That's really good. So I'm going to share my observations as well and also just share a little bit of teaching as well, just in my own words.

You guys pretty much covered every single one of these, right? But number one is to be selective about who you choose to marry, which David nailed, right?
Abraham advised the servant very clearly not to find a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites, lest he be drawn away from the promised land, settle in a foreign land, and ultimately forfeit the promises of God.
You see this kind of warning consistently throughout the Old Testament, the warning to Israel not to marry idolaters, lest they draw you away to worship false gods. In the same way, we should seek not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers in marriage.
And if that is a current temptation for you now, I think part of dating marriage with an unbeliever might seem tolerable to you is because you might not have actually played that decision to its full logical conclusion.
[27:58] You might not have considered what marriage might look like 5, 10, 20 years down the road. So here are two very real possibilities. Number one, in order to conform to the unbeliever, you need to push Christ to the margins of your life in order to keep peace at home.

Slowly but surely all things spiritual, all things related to faith become less and less important to you. You might not actually reject Christ altogether explicitly, but functionally your life is really no different from any unbeliever.
you stop reading your Bible, attending small groups, giving to missionaries, raising your kids in the faith to avoid isolating your other spouse. I think the second possibility is that let's say you keep the faith and you stay involved in the church, but your spouse refuses to engage.
That will naturally pull you apart. imagine going to church alone, never praying together, never sharing the load and raising your kids in the Lord, facing tragedy as a couple without being able to comfort one another with the truths of scripture.
If Christ is your life, your whole life, then marriage with someone else who doesn't share that will likely lead to then two separate lives. Neither of those two realities are desirable.
[29:23] And if you're single and you're considering a relationship with an unbeliever, I encourage you to slow down to think through these things. Men, don't seek to be led astray by getting unequally yoked.

And women, if a non-Christian pursues you, don't even give him the time of day. Don't even give him an inch in your mind. Doesn't share an ounce of what's actually really, really, really important to you.
So number two, go to the right place to find a spouse. Abraham very clearly sends his servant to a specific place to find a wife. He knows that the servant searches among Canaan.
He'll probably not find someone from his kindred. I think we too ought to look in the right places to find our kindred. All right, if I want to find a native Bostonian with that thick accent, the first place I will obviously look is Boston.
If you're looking for someone to marry, a good Christian man or woman, I think the first place you should naturally look is the church, the family of God. And so just a brief word on dating apps, because it's such a relevant cultural phenomenon now.
[30:39] I don't doubt that dating apps can be a means to find a solid life partner. There are godly ways to go about it, and I know increasingly, I know more and more number of marriages that started on dating websites.

But there are two words of caution that I wanted to share about these apps. Number one, surfing these apps, I think frankly, plummets your chance of finding a solid, like-minded Christian.
Anyone can put anything on their profile, and even if they say that they're Christian, what does that really mean for them? They can mean all kinds of things, and they could be sitting under all kinds of teaching.
And number two, more importantly, I think dating apps create, they can create the illusion that there's always someone else out there. There's someone better out there.
You're not satisfied with the direct people that you know, right? And so you hop online to peruse what else is out there. But consumeristically shopping for the maximally optimal guy or girl, it doesn't seem to be a healthy pattern for dating.

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[31:51] I'm sure that there are eligible men and women out there, but you might be missing out on what's directly in front of you. I think I'm old-fashioned, but I think there is something to running after God wholeheartedly, and from time to time glancing over your right shoulder, over your left shoulder, and just seeing who's keeping up with you, the people directly in your life, and linking up with them.

Number three, put the onus on God. We talked about this. Notice how much the servant prays, right? Demonstrates how much the servant trusted in the Lord to find a spouse for Isaac.
that same kind of dependence is needed from us, too. If you want to be married, your first instinct should be to get on your knees and to pray, to pray for that kind of blessing.
Does that peace that surpasses understanding control your mind and your conduct? Do you try to control everything instead?
Making sure that you always leave a good impression to anyone of the opposite gender just on the chance that he or she might be the one. I used to operate like that. Are you always anxious about whether your dating relationship might or might not work out towards marriage?
[33:17] Put the onus on God. Every married person has had an arranged marriage. Some by their family, but all by the sovereign God of the universe.

the Lord orchestrated every detail of this story in Genesis 24, and he's going to do the same for you. Place that burden right completely on God.
Yeah. I know you're trying to. Could you say something? Could you say something that really struck me here? It said, look around, see who's keeping up with you. Can you say a little more about that?
Yeah, I will. Okay. I will. Yeah, I will. Yeah, good question. And then if I don't, if it doesn't satisfy, you could definitely. Yeah. Right.
Okay. Because we just talked a lot about like being observant and communicating and like taking self-initiative. Yep. Like what aspects of the onus of God, like, are you talking about?
[34:22] Like how do we, like what are they and how do we practice it? Yeah, I think I'm going to get to your question as well. If I don't, we could follow up. I don't think putting the onus on God means that we don't take any action, right, which I'm about to share.

So male-led risk-taking initiative, right? It doesn't mean that we just passively twiddle our thumbs, just hoping that marriage is going to plop into our laps. In this passage, you see a male-led risk-taking initiative when Abraham sends his servant to go and get the girl.
To show this fully from scripture would take more time than we have, but I believe that the Bible teaches that in marriage, the man leads and the woman submits.
Male headship is the normative pattern throughout scripture, and so I think those roles should then shape our dating relationships as well. And generally, I think that means that the man initiates dating.
That said, I don't think it's sinful to have a woman ask a man out. Ruth boldly initiates her relationship with Boaz, but such examples, I think, are the exception rather than the norm.
[35:36] And Abraham and the servant's initiative involves real effort and real risk. You read that in the passage. Abraham sends his servant on the quest with no guarantee of success.

He doesn't really know how it's going to all pan out, right? But he nonetheless sends him, and the servant nonetheless acts, not knowing fully how it's going to turn out. I think then that means that the man shouldn't play games with the girl, flirting with her, trying to get her to reveal as many cards in her hand as possible.
The guy should never selfishly try to protect himself by minimizing the chances of getting rejected. Leadership means going first. the man is the first one to lay his cards out on the table, making his intentions as clear as possible, making himself vulnerable.
In verse 17, we noted, the servant is running. He runs to her. He makes the first move. So, to those who are endlessly discerning, praying to God for this miraculous sign, I think we just have to learn how to take risks.
So, when you have intentions, as soon as possible, you ought to make that clear to the woman. And if that sounds scary, then this is just what leadership looks like.
[37:04] I'm going to keep going, but if I didn't answer your question, feel free to hop on. Actions speak louder than words. This is, of course, true. I don't think that necessarily it's prescriptive.

This passage is prescriptive of how we should be praying for a wife, to be like this specific. But there is stuff to observe on what he actually prays for. Yes, Rebecca was very attractive in her

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appearance, but the prayer didn't focus on her superficial appearance or her earthly status at all. It was about her character. Notice, too, that the servant doesn't go really anywhere in the city of Nahor, but he goes specifically to the well where he might find an industrious, servant-minded woman working.
Rebecca fits that bill of a generous, industrious Proverbs 31 wife. She not only serves the servants by giving them a drink quickly without suspicion or hesitancy, but she goes above and beyond by giving the camels a drink as well.
And she quickly, there's that word again in verse 20, and she ran again to draw water. I think you kind of see what kind of woman that Rebecca is.
[38:24] I do think that physical attraction is an important piece in marriage that Ren was talking about, but I think physical attraction is much more dynamic than we tend to think.

It's not static, me, just based on only superficial looks, but the more we learn about another person, for better or for worse, it changes our attraction to that person, right?
My point is that godly character is truly attractive. Qualities like hospitality, generosity, servant-minded posture, grace, love.
As we grow in sanctification, growing more and more like the Lord, our desires are increasingly shaped by what Scripture values. That means more than net worth, more than physical appearance, career success, family background, whatever, we should ask ourselves that crucial diagnostic question, is godliness what I find most attractive?
Proverbs 3130 captures this well, charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. One other thing, right, this is, I think, really interesting.
[39:43] Compare and contrast the two characters, Rebecca and Laban, in this passage. We see the opportunistic, greedy character in Laban in verse 30, when it says that as soon as he saw the rings and the bracelets, then he acted, then he went to the man.

I think it's a foreshadowing of his character. You'll learn more about him later on in Genesis. Laban sees those things first and then extends hospitality. In contrast, there's no indication that Rebecca paid any attention to those things.
She is really not motivated by money, but she's served because that's who she is. That's the kind of person that we should strive to be and to look for.
And the last one is, you're marrying a sinner and I'm cheating on this one, just because I'm drawing on another chapter. But I think it's an important point to make. In Genesis 24, Rebecca is this perfect maiden.
She doesn't have a single flaw. She's attractive, industrious, bold. There's not a single flaw. But three chapters later, when Jacob steals Esau's blessing, who's at the helm of leading that scheme?
[40:56] It's Rebecca. This once perfect, beautiful maiden is now actively trying to scheme her old blind husband to give his blessing to her favorite child and not his.

My point is that you can try to find the most perfect person on paper. And he or she might look like that at first, but just three chapters later, you'll find that this person is a bona fide sinner.
When Christine and I started dating, I thought this girl was perfect. She was flawless.
She could do no wrong. That feeling has not stayed with me in marriage. Not because Christine is especially bad or anything, but that she's just a broken sinner like me, like all of us.
Don't worry, I asked Christine if I could share that and she said only on the condition that I share that when we are dating, she already knew that I was a great sinner. And that in marriage, I was an even greater sinner.
[42:16] So when you date, go and try to find a godly person, but never assume that that will automatically translate to an easy marriage. marriage. Related to that, I challenge really any notion, language, vocabulary of soulmates, just because I think the idea makes it sound like you, once you find the one, right, then you just automatically, easily go skipping off in the sunset.

I think nothing is further from the truth. The marriage of two sinners is work. It's hard work. And you have to be willing to invest in your marriage day after day, brick after brick, lay the foundation of your marriage.
Man, we are short on time, huh? I'm going to just keep going. Sorry, if you guys need to use the bathroom, feel free to go. It's right out these doors, but for the sake of time, I'm just going to keep pressing forward.

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I was going to take a break and give books away, too. Let's just do the book giveaway now. I have three books. Three books. Two of these books were recommended by Bob Coughlin through Brittany.
There are two solid books on dating. If you want either one of them, feel free to raise your hand. Dating. Yes. Yes. There you go.
[43:37] And I have seven myths of seven myths about singleness. Yes. Okay. All right. Can you pass this back? By Sam Albury.

Again, such a faithful example of what a single man can do for the kingdom of God. For the sake of time, let's keep going more to the practicalities of dating.
I think typically a lot of dating relationships begin with friendship. Guys should gaze and learn about this girl's character and reputation from a distance. Just like the servant, right?
We just read, I think someone said that in verse 21. Group hangouts, I think, are a helpful way to do that. And again, if there is interest, the guy should ask the girl on a date.
Not a hangout. Not a catch up. If you have interest, just be open and honest and ask her on a date.
To the girls in the room, if a godly man with a good reputation in the church asks you out on a date, I do generally think that you should try to give him a date or two.
[44:46] You're not obligated to say yes by any means. You owe him nothing. But to reject him on the spot, I think it assumes that you have comprehensive knowledge about who he is.

Consider, too, that God wired guys and girls differently as well. Guys tend to flare up in interest very, very quickly. But that for girls, interest tends to grow slower over time.
I'm sure you've heard of stories about women who initially didn't see their husbands in that light. But over time, that interest grew. That's a general recommendation.
But again, I do not, I want you to know you have no obligation to say yes to him. But I do want you to know that it is just one date. Guys, the bar is not that you are head over heels in love with this girl, asking her to marry you.
Girls, he is not head over heels in love with you, asking you to marry him. Christians, I think, try to take dating very intentionally and try not to casually date, which I think is a good instinct, good motivation.
[45:55] But I think they can swing too far the other direction and exaggerate the meaning of one date. I generally think we can appropriately lower expectations for what a date means.

After all, if you're, and if after going out on a date, you realize you guys are not going to work out, it's really not a big deal. It's not the end of the world. And so if you guys end up not working out, then I encourage you guys to seek to handle that in maturity.
The key verse in all this is Romans 12, 10, Outdo one another in showing honor. Resist the temptation to gossip and only speak highly about the other person.
I've sometimes heard that people are scared to date within the church context out of the fear of the messiness of breaking up. I think there is some validity to that concern.
But if we generally carry ourselves with Christ-like love and maturity, I don't think that that should outright prevent us from dating within the church. But it should sober us, right?
[47:02] Sober us to treat one another with love, respect, and kindness. Let's continue to follow a growing relationship. So you guys follow, you guys go on a few dates.

Here I make a distinction between going on dates. And being in a dating relationship. I do think that you have to make that transition clear from the former to the latter with, again, the guy initiating and leading.
Clearly and openly setting expectations for the dating relationship. So if you guys are both officially in the dating phase, once again, the goal should be that you are aiming to answer this one simple question.
Are we going to get married? All right. That's the main question you're trying to answer is always pressing forward on clarity on that question over intimacy.
Yes is a good answer. No is a good answer. An indefinite, lengthy maybe is not a good answer.
[48:07] That doesn't mean that you need to know whether you're going to marry them within three weeks, three months, but you should be making real progress towards that question. And in your dating, try to determine your compatibility with these things that I call the 7S.

As you progress in your dating, your relationship will look different from the 5th date to the 15th date to the 50th. And your conversations will naturally progress from surface level to more intimate

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details.
And so I try to order these in, try to order these in terms of the progression of a natural dating relationship. Right? So first one is fun. See if you guys have fun with one another.
Right? Do you talk well with one another? 99% of your marriage will be just talking. Does the conversation flow or does it feel like you're talking to the wall?
If your enjoyment of one another isn't growing over time, then I think it probably makes sense to call it quits. Two, future.
[49:17] What are your future goals? What are your career goals? What are your ministry goals? If one of you guys wants to go in full-time ministry, even full-time missions work, and the other for the life of them cannot be open to that life, then why keep dating?

You have an answer. You have clarity on that simple question of are we going to get married? Three, faith. What do you believe about everything?
Some topics include gender roles in church and marriage, spiritual gifts, doctrines of grace, baby baptism. If you guys are completely on the opposite ends of the spectrum theologically, you have to imagine that that would create some kind of conflict in your future marriage.
If you believe in baby baptism and your boyfriend doesn't, what are you going to do? Are you going to split the difference and baptize half the baby? What are you going to do if you pray in tongues and your girlfriend thinks it's totally, total gobbledygook?
These are the issues that you need to understand sooner rather than later. I think politics and your political stance also would be an appropriate place to talk about these things.
[50:29] Number four, finances. How do you manage your finances? What kind of lifestyle do you expect? Are you expecting a luxury car or are you content with a beat-up junker?

Be honest about these things. How much do you want to tithe? How important is giving for you? And then who manages the finances? Number five, family.
What do you envision your future family to look like? Number of kids, whether you're open to adoption. And if you're going to have kids, then who's going to be taking care of the kids, right? What's the plan for that? I think this is also an important point. What was your family like growing up? What models of marriage have you seen in your life? Perhaps more than you know, your parents' marriage can have a real heavy influence on your marriage.
Because those are the things you learn from. Fighting. How do you resolve a conflict? Are you a rager? Or are you a brooder?
[51:32] You guys know what I mean by that? Share examples of how you resolve conflict in the past with others. But beyond sharing examples, I generally recommend, though it's not required, that couples date long enough to experience conflict.

I think it helps to move past the honeymoon stage and to get to the real stuff. For some couples, that happens quickly. For others, it takes some time. Conflict itself is not a sign that you shouldn't get married.
A healthy marriage isn't marked by the absence of conflict, but by handling conflict well. So learning to fight well, to resolve issues in a healthy way, is a strong habit, strong pattern to get into as you go into marriage.
Last one is flaws. There's a reason why I put this last. This is where the most personal, intimate details of your failures, foolishness, your fears should come out.
Remember, in dating, there is no ring. There is absolute freedom for either party. They have 100% liberty to pull out of that relationship at any point.
[52:44] So be wise about sharing the most personal stuff that you have. Wait to see if that relationship is growing and share more towards where there's trust and feel like it is actually heading towards marriage.

And ultimately, before you get engaged, the goal is that you shouldn't hold back anything, even the most painful memories, even your most regretful choices. You don't need to share in fine detail, but you do need to share so that the other person has a full picture of what he or she is signing up for.
All throughout that process, again, we already talked about this, is involve the church. If you think about it, hardly anything in this life comes with a lifelong commitment-like marriage. I can almost guarantee for most of you guys, you will move to another city.
You will find another church. You will work another job. You will find different friends. But you can never break the vow of marriage that you make with your spouse. Through sickness or health, for

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richer or for poorer, you are committed to this person.
This one decision is, frankly, one of the most important decisions you will ever make in your life. Because your marriage will absolutely change you. That can be scary then, right?
[54:08] To choosing a spouse. When we think about the massive implications of the decision that we make, it's kind of scary. What is so reassuring is that we don't have to choose a spouse on our own.

Our trusted brothers and sisters, our mentors and pastors and disciples at church, our parents and siblings, they can all speak into your life, counsel you with their aged, experienced perspective, and model what a godly marriage and family can look like.
So seek their feedback. Ask good questions. Pursue purity and godliness. There's not a single thing that you can do that will make your relationship more messy, stressful, confused, or shameful than to cross physical boundaries that are only meant for the commitment of marriage.
The men, again, should be the ones to set clear boundaries and keep them. In dating, the woman is looking to see if in your leadership you are a man of integrity, if you are a man of your word.
Do you say one thing and do a completely different other thing? Are you trustworthy? The women should be the ones to follow the man's leadership.
[55:25] In dating, the man is looking to see if you follow and submit to his leadership well. I've heard this argument from some guys before, right?

You need to test drive the car before you decide to buy it, right? Shouldn't we explore our physical compatibility before I put a ring on it? I think that analogy is actually very illuminating.
Who is the car in that scenario? Is sex with a precious man or woman made in the image of God something as casual as going to the car dealership and test driving a car?
Is that kind of language really what you want to hear from a future spouse, someone who's supposed to honor and respect you? So glorify God altogether in your relationship by pursuing purity.
Set clear boundaries, not to do anything that would be arousing or tempting for one another. Examples of boundaries could be committing not to spend one-on-one time together in private, no closed doors, especially late at night.
[56:33] If you are snuggling on the couch at 11 p.m. watching a romantic movie, for most warm-blooded humans, you are playing with fire. Proverbs 6.27 says, Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?

Understand that as you progress in your relationship, the temptation to sexual sin doesn't decrease necessarily, but it can increase. Because we naturally are wired that emotional intimacy tends to lead towards physical intimacy.
So flee, right? Scripture commands us to stand firm against the devil. We can stand firm against him, but it says to flee from sexual sin. That's how seriously we need to take it.
Be like Joseph and flee. Run, run hard. And you're never going to regret taking obedience to the Lord this seriously. You're never going to regret it.
And if you guys prove to be a continual source of sexual temptation, is it worth dating anymore? Is there anything more precious than your personal holiness to the Lord?
[57:46] And I know that sounds harsh. It sounds hard. But as we preached on in Matthew, Jesus is uncompromising in Matthew 5. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It's better that you lose one of your members and your whole body be thrown to hell.

If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it out. Cut it off and throw it away. Okay. Engagement. Time only allows a brief address on the engagement phase.
Trying to move on quickly. Only two things that I want to make clear. When you are engaged, you are not yet married. You haven't made a clear public vow of lifelong commitment to one another. And so you do not have the privileges to enjoy all the marital privileges that you get to enjoy in marriage only. Continue to fight temptation.
Don't mark your wedding day with any tinge of shame or regret. And speaking of weddings, secondly, I think while there's sometimes unforeseen circumstances and no two couples' stories are alike, I generally don't think we need two to three years to plan for a wedding.
[58:53] It's our culture that tells us that we need to have a showy, expensive display of our unique love to one another in our wedding. It's not something we need in scripture. Invest more time in preparing not for the singular day of your wedding, but for the lifetime of marriage ahead of you.

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The health of your marriage is not determined by the big dates on your calendar. Anniversaries, weddings, Valentine's Day. Those can be important and helpful reminders and opportunities to invest in your marriage.
But a healthy marriage is more determined by the love you share on an average boring Tuesday night. In the end, the gospel is the best dating advice that you will ever hear.
And what do I mean by that? The gospel of Jesus Christ is what distinguishes Christian dating from worldly dating. The gospel is what you look for in another person.
Has the other person been shaped by the gospel? Does this person cherish the gospel? That's what you're looking for. The gospel is what you talk about in dating.
[60:02] Of course, it's not the only thing that you talk about, but if you are a believer, and Jesus Christ is your true first love, the gospel is what should connect you both.

The gospel shapes your motives in dating. You're not dating to fill a void, prove her worth, silence loneliness, or compete with others.
The gospel frees you from needing a relationship to justify you. And the gospel related is what keeps you content in the world of dating.
So whether you're single, without a lot of prospects of marriage, you've just recently been through a breakup, or that you're getting close to marrying your dream partner. Every single one of these scenarios, they're all equally equipped to be happy, to find contentment in the Lord.
The latter has no advantage over the former to contrive joy in this life. So let the gospel shape all of your life, in your singleness, in your dating, in your engagement, and in your marriage.

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