

Session 1: Relationships to the Glory of God

I. Overview of Three Sessions

Matthew 22:37-39 – *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*¹

II. How Can We Honor God?

A. The Goal of Relationships: The Glory of God

1. Proper questions become:
 - i. How can I most glorify God with my life and relationships?
 - ii. How can I encourage others to glorify him in their thoughts, words and conduct?
2. The wrong questions are therefore:
 - i. How old must I be to have a girlfriend?
 - ii. How far is too far in our physical relationship?
 - iii. According to the Bible, can we kiss, hold hands, and show physical affection?
3. God’s Assumption

1 Corinthians 10:31 – *“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 – *“¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”*
4. Pursuing Relationships Is A Lot Like Sowing Seed

Galatians 6:7-9 – *“⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit*

¹The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2007. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the ESV translation.

will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

B. The Heart of Relationships: Trusting God

Proverbs 3:5-7 – *"⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil."*

1. Trusting God's Word and Promises

Matthew 6:33 – *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

2. Trusting God and Not Our Methods

Psalm 20:7 – *"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God."*

3. Trusting God's Timing

James 4:13-16 – *"¹³Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'—¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.' ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."*

C. The Posture Toward Relationships: Humility

1 Peter 5:5b – *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

1. We Humble Ourselves Under God's Word

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 – *"¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'"*

1 Corinthians 7:39 – *“A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”*

Romans 1:26-27 – *“²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.”*

Romans 12:2 – *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

2. We Humble Ourselves by Seeking Counsel

- i. Before a relationship begins, during a relationship, and at major points of decision you need to seek counsel.

Proverbs 11:14 – *“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”*

Proverbs 22:3 – *“The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.”*

- ii. Living in Committed Community

Hebrews 3:12-13 – *“¹²Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”*

Proverbs 18:1 – *“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.”*

- iii. Questions to Consider

- a. What input did you receive that helped you reach the conclusions you reached?
- b. What do other wise, godly people think about your readiness to be in a relationship?

- c. What do other wise, godly people think about the readiness of the other person?
- d. Would other people say you are committed or isolated?

3. We Humble Ourselves in Prayer

III. How Do We Love Our Neighbor?

A. Considering Others Before Ourselves

Philippians 2:3-5 – *“³Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”*

B. Being Patient

Proverbs 21:5 – *“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”*

C. Guarding Hearts

Proverbs 4:23 – *“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”*

1. Being careful with what we communicate.

Proverbs 11:22 – *“Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.”*

2. Being consistent in our words and actions.

Proverbs 10:9 – *“Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.”*

Romans 13:10a – *“Love does no wrong to a neighbor...”*

D. Treating With All Purity

1 Timothy 5:1-2 – *“¹Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”*

Session 2: Biblical Relationships**I. Stages of Relationships**

- A. Friendship**
- B. Dating/Courtship**
- C. Engagement**
- D. Marriage**

II. Before a Relationship Begins

- A. Prayer**
- B. Purposeful Singleness**

1 Corinthians 7:32-34a – *“³²I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴and his interests are divided.”*

- C. Grow in Grace and Knowledge**
- D. Build Friendships**

1. Work hard at your relationships.
 - i. Build friendships with all sorts of people.
 - ii. Be careful not to single out someone of the opposite sex under the guise of “we’re just friends.”
 - iii. Enjoy pure, God-glorifying friendships with those of the opposite sex.
 - iv. Beware of secret relationships and “special friendships.”

John 3:19-21 — *“¹⁹And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”*

2. Speak with others about readiness.
 - i. Am I ready? Is this other guy/gal ready?
 - ii. If this relationship were to progress, would I be in a place to be married?

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 – *“⁸To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. ⁹But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”*

- iii. Not Ready + Affections = Still Not Ready To Act on or Express Affections

III. Entering a Dating/Courtship Relationship

A. Clarify Intentions/Goals

1. The role of terms
2. The goal is to find out if God intends this relationship to lead to marriage.
3. The role of communication
 - i. Communicate at the beginning, along the way, and especially at points of change.
 - ii. Communicate to discern God’s will
 - iii. Communicate about reasonable expectations
4. The role physical/sexual affection
 - i. Very appropriate and glorifying to God in marriage.
 - ii. Sexual affection outside of marriage is wrong.
 - iii. Physical affection:
 - Can lead to further sin.
 - Can confuse.
 - Makes ending the relationship difficult.

- Makes future relationships difficult.
- Is meant for your spouse.

Therefore:

- It is presumption to introduce physical affection thinking that this relationship will end in marriage.
- It is manipulation to introduce physical affection in hopes of weathering through difficult times.

While sexual affection (petting, fondling, sexual intercourse) outside of marriage is wrong, physical affection in it's many forms (hugging, holding hands, kissing) are debatable matters (Romans 14:1) and each of us must do only what we are convinced is glorifying to God and what we can give thanks for (Romans 14:5-6) knowing that we will stand before God to give an account (Romans 14:10).

B. Clarify Progression

1. Where is this relationship going?
 - i. What is this relationship revealing about me? About the other guy/gal?
 - ii. Is this relationship helping us glorify God?
 - iii. What about the majors?²
 - a. What does this person believe and why? How are they shaped by what they believe?
 - b. How well do they understand and apply the gospel?
 - c. How strong is their walk with God?
 - d. How well do they relate to others close to them?
 - e. How do they respond to correction?

² Adapted from Bob Kauffman, "Parenting Ages 19-22: Rules and Relationships" (sermon, Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, MD, May 15, 2010), http://www.covlife.org/resources/3638086-Rules_and_Relationships (accessed April 12, 2013).

- f. Where does God seem to be leading this person?
- iv. What about the minors? (education, savings, gifting, family background)³
- 2. What is happening to our community?
 - i. Don't abandon all your other friendships when you enter a dating/courtship relationship.
 - ii. Seek fellowship with others both together as a couple and separate.
 - iii. Building Community for Long-Distance Relationships

C. Enjoy the Process

IV. Concluding a Dating/Courtship Relationship

A. When and Under What Circumstances Should a Dating/Courtship Conclude?

1. God's Word

As you've gotten to know each other, do both of you have the qualities fitting for a spouse? I'm not talking fully, but in measure, truly?

2. Personal Desire

From what you have observed, could you see yourself marrying this person?

- i. If a man, is this the woman you want to lead, care for, cherish, provide for, and protect for the rest of your life (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Pet. 3:7; Prov. 5:15-19; Col. 3:19)?⁴
- ii. If a woman, is this the man you want to serve, respect, love, honor, submit to, encourage, and support for the rest of your life (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6; Col. 3:18)?

3. Counsel of Others

What do other people think? Is this the person? Is now the time? Where does God seem to be leading you two?

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

B. Unto Marriage

C. Unto Friends

1. If you end the relationship:
 - i. Resolve offenses
 - ii. Provide clarification
 - iii. Really Be Friends
2. If someone else ended the relationship:
 - i. Resolve offenses
 - ii. Seek clarification
 - iii. Entrust yourself and the other person to God
 - iv. Really Be Friends

D. Engagement

Session 3: Roles in Relationships

I. Young Men & Women

2 *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),*
3 *“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”*
(Ephesians 6:2-3, ESV)

I'd like to propose to you today that we're called to honor our father and mother in the way that we live our life everyday.

A. Teens

These are delightful years to learn how to properly bear responsibility, take initiative and walk faithfully all while growing in our dependence on Christ's finished work on our behalf – the marriage of our responsibilities and dependence is the most important 'marriage' to have in view during this time because it leads us to fruitful life in godliness over the decades to come!

B. Roles of Young Men

Learn to lead well

Show Respect

Be a servant

A few practical items:

Study Scripture individually – what is a godly man like?

Be prepared to communicate with her dad regularly

Have a plan, not just a feeling

First and foremost treat her as a sister

Don't lead in a way that draws her to yourself more than points to Christ

Be careful as you may be relating with another man's future wife

C. Roles of Young Women

Keep communicating with your parents

Practice submission in your own home

A few practical items:

Study Scripture individually – what is a godly woman like?

Serve him with modesty

Let the young man lead

Stay objective

D. Parents

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4, ESV)

Roles of a Dad

“How much involvement is too much?” That largely depends on your child and the situation.

Leading a Son

- Teach him how to make godly decisions through the relationship (this is hopefully just an extension of what you have already been doing).
- Spend time with him consistently to ask questions.
- Help him in determining if the pace, the type of conversations, the use of time together, etc. are wise.
- Do not wait for his initiative; be purposeful.

- Review with him what you understand to be the desires of the other family and your own at this stage of the relationship.
- Engage with the young lady in ways that convey your acceptance and respect in front of your son.

Leading a Daughter

- Long before she is of age, you set the example of what it means to “court” or date!
- Help your daughter understand how men think and respond
- In your desire to protect your daughter, make sure you are motivated by grace towards the young man.
- Build a relationship with the young man.
- Relate with his parents; do some things together as families; get to know each other.

Roles of a Mother

Caring for a Daughter

- Invest, invest, invest!
- Look over areas where she needs to further prepare.
- Talk over everything...open up in ways that may have not been appropriate prior to this season of their life.
- Tell her everything you wish you would have been told.
- Tell her about the opportunity before and what you would do differently if you could do it again.

- Go out; have coffee or something and talk. Draw her out. Ask lots of questions.
- Make the young man feel welcome in your home.

Caring for a Son

- Share with him how women think and feel
- Be attentive to things that might be a stumbling block for him or her...you have a perspective your son needs.
- Share with your husband your thoughts, questions and concerns.
- Make her feel welcome in your home...plan a time with her mother; just the two of you

Our ultimate goal is the Glory of God, not a process and nomenclature of dating or courtship!

E. Friends

- Friendship... pure and simple
 - You need them (and they need you) before, during and following potential fruition of this relationship
 - True friends can provide true council
 - Speaking into your friend's life;
 - Cultivate Biblical Convictions
 - Build for the future with individuals
 - Friends are not:
 - Carrier pigeons for what you can't say to each other
 - Sounding boards for your struggles
 - The authority on what your relationship should look like

F. Role of Pastors

- Pastors are able to provide council
 - Parents
 - Teens
 - Those whose parents aren't involved
- Able to assist when requested for young men and women seeking to serve a potential future mate.

II. Close

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

(Psalm 16:5-6, ESV)

Notice that the Lord Himself is our beautiful inheritance, not a wife or a husband!

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

(Psalm 16:11, ESV)

What a glorious hope! No matter your station in life, now or in the days ahead, there is fullness of joy in our true Father's presence, there are pleasures we can look forward to forevermore!