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## DATING

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### Part 7 of Religion Saves

Pastor Mark Driscoll | February 17, 2008

You're listening to "Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions," a sermon series in which Pastor Mark Driscoll answers nine controversial questions about Jesus and Christianity. The following is a presentation of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. For more audio and video content, please visit [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org).

Well, howdy, Mars Hill. Very nice day out there. My name's Mark, if you're new, one of the pastors here at the church. We're doing a series called "Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions." Here's how it works. We let people vote online. They got to post 893 questions, 5,500 comments, 343,000 votes. We took the top nine questions, turned 'em into a sermon series.

Today we're dealing with dating and how to have a righteous relationship that has no sexual contact or sin of any sort or kind. I'll pray, and we'll get right to work, and I'll answer the question for you.

God, we love you because you love us. You're a great God. You built us for relationship. This church, Lord God, is filled with so many single people, that this question has a lot of practical implications for us. And so, please give us wisdom to know how to do life, including relationships and dating and marriage, in a way that is pleasing to you and profitable to us.

So, as we study your Word, Lord Jesus, help us to have minds to understand, hearts to receive, so that we might live new lives in your good name, amen.

Well, here's the question. It's about dating, and I'll say this by way of preface, about half of Mars Hill Church is unmarried. How many of you are unmarried? All right, yes. [Chuckle] Fix it, right? I mean, look around. So, anyways, about half of Mars Hill overall is single.

The Ballard campus is more than half single, and so this is huge implications for our church. Some of you who are here and you're married, you may ask, "What's this got to do with me?" Well, I hope you love your brothers and sisters in Christ. I hope you want to give them good counsel.

If you're parents, you're gonna need to counsel your own kids when they hit that dating kind of age. And the singles here, they put up with married sermons all the time, like the birth control sermon was probably a waste of an hour of their life.

(Laughter)

"I can't do that, I can't do that, I can't do that, thank you for reminding me. I'll go home now and cry in my pillow all by myself."

(Laughter)

So, they've hung in there, and we're gonna love 'em back. So, here's the question, "How does a Christian date righteously? And what are the physical, emotional, and mentally connecting boundaries a Christian must set while developing an intimate relationship prior to marriage?" That's the question.

How do you date as a Christian? That's the big question. Okay. I'll start in Genesis. It's a book of beginnings, and I'll tell you that therein we see that our God is – the only God is Trinitarian – Father, Son, and Spirit loving relational community. God made the world. God made us in his image and likeness, which means in part, we desire love, relationship, connection with people in a meaningful, covenantal way.

God created our first father, Adam, first. And so he had to get established, get his life settled, which is preparatory for becoming a husband. And this is God's pattern for men. God said that everything was good. In fact, in Genesis 1:31, he said that everything was very good.

And then in Genesis 2, he says there's one thing that's not good. It's not good for the man to be alone. So, then, God made Eve, our first mother. And God brought her to Adam, and he's sort of – God is functioning as the dad, walking her down the proverbial aisle. The first pastor overseeing the first wedding.

Adam sees her, meets her, says, "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken from man." He sings a love song to her in the Hebrew. And then God oversees and officiates the first wedding.

And Genesis 2:24 says, "For this reason" – for this cause of marriage – "a man will leave his mother and father, be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." It's a three-fold process. A man leaves his mom and dad, and grows up, becomes a man (because marriage is for men, not for boys),

and then he marries, and then he enjoys sexual consummation – intimacy with his wife.

Genesis 2:25 says, “They were both naked, without any shame.” There’s nothing embarrassing or wrong about this. You’re supposed to walk with God, get your life together, gentlemen, meet a woman, marry her, and then enjoy the benefits of being married.

And it’s wonderful. It’s God’s intention and God’s plan. What we see then in Genesis 3 is that sin enters the world. It affects everything. We’re sinners by nature and choice, and this includes our dating relationships and our view of gender and sexuality and marriage, to be sure.

The result is today that there are really two different ways that people wrongly react to marriage. One is a fierce commitment to independence that tends to exist in our city. And our church is a city within our city, meaning we do marriage and sexuality and gender and family differently than the city. Not because we hate the city, but because we love the city, and we believe that the life that Jesus gives is the best life, and so we want to live as a countercultural city of Jesus – Mars Hill Church – showing the bigger city of Seattle, “This is what life can be like with Jesus.”

And in the big city of Seattle, the real value is on independence, “I don’t want to get married. I don’t want to have kids. I don’t want to settle down. I don’t want to have any obligations. I don’t want to disrupt my life.”

But sometimes, conversely with Christianity, there can be a second idol, and that being relationship and family – as if you’re single, you’re not really a human being, as if you don’t get married and have kids, you’re somehow second class, and that your life just doesn’t have full meaning or purpose unless you’re married with kids.

And that’s a blessing, and it’s wonderful. I’m married, with five kids and love being a husband and a father, but Jesus himself, our great God, he was single, lived a full, pleasing life to the Father that was purposeful.

And so, ultimately, the real issue is, first, relationship with God. Not valuing independence or family as the means by which we receive our joy, but our relationship with God. And so, for those of you who are here and single, let me tell you that 91 percent of all Americans eventually marry. So, most of you will marry.

And before you do, here are three heart questions to get us started. First, how is your relationship with Jesus? How is your relationship with – are you loving Jesus? Walking with Jesus? Praying to Jesus? Reading your Bible? Growing in your relationship with Jesus? First things first.

All right, God made you with a desire to be married. Most people, if they tap their deepest desire, because they’re made in the image and likeness of God, they really want to be in love with one person and to give their life to that person and grow old together and live that proverbial great life.

But to do that, first thing is, you’ve gotta have a great relationship with Jesus. All right? If you’re not connected to Jesus, you’re not gonna have the source of love and life that is required to have a good marriage. So, if you’re not close to Jesus, don’t worry about getting married, worry about walking as a faithful Christian. That’s your first priority.

Number two, are you believing any cultural lies? Are you dudes listening to Tom Leykis? Are you dudes looking at porn? You gals looking at porn? You gals reading the women’s magazines, listening to ungodly friends, the talk shows? Are you believing things that are not true?

Are you letting culture and not Scripture really determine your sexuality, your dress, how you date, how you present yourself, how you engage in certain relationships with members of the opposite sex? We need to be very clear that the way we do life is different than the rest of the city.

And it doesn’t mean we don’t love the city. It means we love ‘em so much, that we don’t want to give them a bad example. We want to give them a better alternative.

And number three, do you accept that marriage is not just for happiness, but also for holiness? How many of you are married, and you would testify that it’s not always happy? But it does make you holy. Some people think, “I’m unhappy. I’ll get married. That’ll make me happy.”

No, sinner plus sinner doesn’t equal less sin. Just so you know. Right? You’re wicked, they’re wicked, you marry – it’s lucky that anyone lives through marriage, truly. That if your whole goal is that marriage will make me happy – no, it’s gonna make you holy. Once you get married, you’ll see your sin. They’ll see their sin. You’ll realize there’s more stuff in your life to work on than you ever dreamed – or feared.

And some of you didn’t even know you had certain sins ‘til you got married. You thought they were quirks, and all of a sudden, the person you’re married to is like, “Why do you do that? Why do you think that? Why do you say that? Why do you smell like that?”

You’re like, “Man, I guess it’s a lot I need to work on, huh?” Yeah, pretty much everything, yeah, you need to work on. And I’ve been married now 15 years, March 12 is the 20th anniversary of Grace and I’s first date. High school sweethearts. Started seeing one another at 17.

And we both testify that there have been some hard days. We love each other. It’s certainly – being married has made us more holy, but not every minute has been all happy. You know, like the Sound of Music, “Hey, get the drapes. Let’s make our own clothes, sing songs, and jog around the neighborhood.” It’s not always been like that. There’s some rough days, just so you know.

So, here’s the issue. If you’re here and you’re single, or maybe you’re a parent of someone who is dating age, there are four different ways to have a relationship. Three of them are biblically acceptable. One of them is godless, horrible, evil, nasty, and vile; so, we would discourage that.

And in this, I want to show you that there are three legitimate options, so that we’re not legalists. Because not every way of doing a Christian

relationship works for every single person. So, we'll deal with the first.

We'll deal with the first. The first is, prearranged marriage.

(Laughter)

You can hear everybody – you're like, "We're not gonna do that, right? We're not doing that here, right?" If you look under your chair, there's a number on a sticker.

(Laughter)

You get that number, you find the person with a number, and that's God's sovereign will for you.

(Laughter)

Okay, now prearranged marriage is – it is in the Old Testament. Right? It's where basically someone, usually your mom and dad, they pick who you're gonna marry. They pick. Right? So, you're like, "I don't want that."

Okay, but there are cultures that this still works. And I know it's not American culture, so I'm not saying this is how we do it. But in some cultures, it still works. I'll give you one example, and then we'll move on. In East India, I've got a dear buddy, he's a great pastor, amazingly godly man. He had an arranged marriage.

He and his wife have an amazing marriage. They love each other. They love Jesus. They're incredible. They run orphanages. They planted like 300 churches. I mean, this is an amazing couple, one of the best.

And I was there some years ago, and I talked to his teenaged son, and I asked him, "So, hey, how's school? Do you have a girlfriend?" And he looked at me like a beagle that heard a high-pitched whistle at girlfriend.

And he said, "Well, we don't have girlfriends." I said, "What do you have?" He said, "My mom and dad, they have prearranged my marriage." I was like, "Really? Well, how do you feel about that?" He said, "Well, I want a marriage like my mom and dad." I thought, "Oh, boy, you don't hear this a lot in our country." Right?

He said, "My mom and dad had a prearranged marriage. They totally love each other. They love Jesus. They have an awesome marriage. They know me very well. They know my likes/dislikes. They've allowed me to speak in. They're not gonna just assign somebody to me, so I'm involved.

He said, "But I trust my mom and dad to make the best decision. And I want my mom and dad to help me to have a marriage like theirs." Okay? Now, when I was a 16-year-old boy, prearranged marriage sounded ridiculous. Like, "That's ridiculous." Now that I'm a dad, I'm like, "That's brilliant, really." It's a whole nother angle, is it not, dads?

How many of you dads are like, "Yeah, when I was 16, you know, I had a car. It's like, okay, here's the seat and three in the back – I could drive four girls." And when you're 16, you're thinking different. When you're a dad, you're like, "Ah – I'll choose. That's brilliant."

Now, the next is sort of like it, but a modified form of courtship that was popular in this country up until the mid-1900s. In Scripture, you could use verses like Jeremiah 29:6, where I says, "Take wives, have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons. Give you daughters in marriage." Right?

The language of the Bible is that men take a wife. They leave their mother and father. They stop trying to be a guild leader on World of War Craft. They stop smoking pot. They give up the Star Wars jammies. They go out and make their own way, find their own church. Right? And that they take a wife, and that daughters are given – this is the language of the Bible repeatedly, daughters are given in marriage.

And we even show this in a Christian ceremony, where dad walks his daughter down the aisle. He gives her away. That's all part of the showing of this biblical principle. And here, a courtship is where the young woman stays close to her family. And then a young suitor needs to come to their house and needs to get to know the family, and ultimately ends up dating dad first. Right?

Meaning, if you want to get to my daughter, I'm between her and you. You get to know me, you bring me flowers.

(Laughter)

I like nice candy. We'll go out for long walks on the beach. We'll have heartfelt conversations. And if I approve, you can get to know her. And if not, they'll never find your body. That's sort of courtship.

(Laughter)

Okay? And it's a dad who loves, along with this wife, loves his daughters, protects his daughters, is involved in making sure that the wrong boys don't get access. And this totally works with a few variables. One, the parents are godly and have wisdom – even if it's a single parent. They're godly and have wisdom.

They live near their child, or their child still lives with them. Right? Maybe 19, 20-year-old gal, still lives with her parents. But if you live far away, or you're 40 years old, and you're a grown adult, own your own house, and got your own job, and been on your own for a while, this isn't exactly

functional for everybody in our society.

And just 'cause somebody has Christian parents doesn't mean they're ready to oversee a courtship. I can give you a long list of dads who say they're Christians, that men in this church have approached them and said, "I've gotten to know your daughter at Mars Hill. I love Jesus. I love your daughter. I would like to get to know her better. Is it okay? Do I have your permission to invest some time into this relationship? And do you have any questions for me?"

And I've had dads literally tell the young men who mean well and trying to honor say, "Well, can't you just sleep with her? Why do you gotta be so serious?" And the young men come back, they're like, "The dad wants me to sleep with her. I don't need to do that, right?" Like, "No, because the dad's an idiot."

(Laughter)

I mean, how devastating is it for a daughter, when a young man wants to honor her, and her dad's discouraging it? I mean, unbelievable. So, it's wise parents who know Jesus and know what we're talking about.

And at the Driscoll family, this is how it's gonna go for us – courtship. All right? Meaning, I've got two girls. One's Ashley, she's 10; and I've got Alexi, who's 4. And any guy who wants to know them has gotta come over to my house. Is gonna meet 'em on my terms. Is gonna pass my doctrinal statement quiz, and will be hooked up to my polygraph, and we'll arm wrestle.

(Laughter)

And if he can take me, he can't date her. 'Cause I need to be able to smack down at any point.

(Laughter)

So, that's how – we have this list of things and the way it's gonna go. And so, I've talked to my 10-year-old daughter about this since she was a little girl, "I love you. You're my daughter. I adore you." I'm the snuggle daddy. I'm the daddy date daddy. I'm the hugs and kisses daddy. I'm the daddy who adores his daughter. And I believe it's a great honor to be a daddy to a girl.

And so, I've told her, "Any boys want to get to know you, talk to you, any boys trying to e-mail you" – she's 10 – "you let me know. You let me know." So, this last week it was Valentine's Day, "Hey, did any boys give you any valentines? Like, 'Hey, be my valentine, be my girlfriend, go out with me?'"

She's like "Why, daddy?" I said, "'Cause until you're notified otherwise, I'm your Valentine, right?"

(Laughter)

"I bought you a card. I'm your Valentine. It's dad. Okay?"

(Laughter)

She's like, "No, they didn't." I was like, "Good, good, good." And my 4-year-old daughter, Alexi, we've already had this conversation repeatedly. Start 'em early, right? So, I'll give you an example, like Saturday, I was sleeping. I had my face kind of over the side of the bed. And I hear this – I feel this breathe on my face, this little breathe.

So, I open one eye, and it's Alexi, 4-year-old goose, blond hair, blue eyes, looks like her mama. And she's sitting there in her cute pink jammies. She says, "Mornin', daddy." I said, "Hi, honey." She pulls this out, she says, "I made you a love letter."

(Laughter)

This is a love letter from goose. It's got little smiley face stickers and hearts on it. And can't really tell, but it says, "Dad," and it's a picture of her and me snuggling. She looks at me. I said, "Oh, thank you, sweetie-pie." She says, "It's my love letter." I said, "Well, I love you too, honey." She said, "Can I snuggle?" "Yeah."

So, we snuggle, and we're talking and visiting and hanging out. And I said, "What do you want to do today?" She says, "I'd like to have a daddy date." I said, "Okay, what do you want to do?" "Let's get the whole family and go for a walk and feed the ducks." "Okay."

See, that's the relationship I want with my girls, love letters, snuggling, encouragement, affection, daddy dates. I wanna be the first man in their life, and I wanna make sure that any other man who comes into their life is the kind of man who should be in their life, and knows what he's doing. That's courtship.

Now, for those of you who do love Jesus, the hope and prayer is that courtship works for your family. But some of you, you're older singles. You're mid-30s, 40, you been on your own for a long time. You got a good job. You love Jesus. You're parents don't know the Lord. You don't live anywhere near 'em. They're not wise with counsel. It's gonna be a little different for you. That'll be option number four.

But first, we've got to deal with option number three. And that is non-Christian dating. We'll say it that way. Don't date like this! That's the big idea. In Seattle, that's how everyone dates. In the city within the city, Mars Hill Church, we don't do it this way.

Here's what dating is in the non-Christian form. The word "dating" was introduced into English vernacular in 1896 as a pseudonym or synonym for prostitution. Okay? In the early 1900s, women's magazines started coming out telling women, "Here's what it means to be a real woman."

So, now it's not just family and faith that are shaping femininity, now it is a real woman, and if you look at the magazines at the grocery store checkout line, they're unbelievable, "Ten things to do in bed to make your boyfriend happy." Not one of 'em is, "Read the Bible." I mean, it just – it's really bad advice.

(Laughter)

All right, just think about that on the way home. And it's, "Dress like this," and "Buy these products." And it creates in women this desire for this whole industry of products to prop up the advertisers. And it doesn't encourage godliness.

What happens then is the 1920s. Restaurants, movie theaters, dance halls open up, so people can congregate outside of the home. 1930s, the automobile becomes more common in sales. So, now, young men don't go hang out at the gal's house with her parents oversight, in a place that's safe for her. They pick her up and take her out, usually into the city, to go to dance clubs and movies and parties and things of that nature.

Well, by the 1940s, it dawns on the guys, this costs a lot of money, going on a date. You gotta get new clothes, flowers, car, gotta pick her up, gotta take her out, gotta pay for dinner.

So then there's this expectation of sexual favors, "If I'm spending money, I should get something." And that is, essentially, prostitution. I paid money, where's my reward? Then in the 1960s, the culture embraces that with feminism and the sexual revolution.

As well in 1960s, the first Playboy magazine finds its way behind the counter. So, now, young men are looking at pornography, going to pick up young women, take them away from their families, spending money, expecting sexual favors and expecting the women to dress like the women they see in the pornographic magazines, which is only being more encouraged by the women's magazines.

This leads to the 1970s, where the birth control pill comes into existence, so that women can date and sleep around without threat of pregnancy. This includes legalized abortion. You can kill the baby if you happen to get pregnant, and no-fault divorce. If you do get married, you can get out without any strings attached. And this altogether reshapes gender, sexuality, and marriage.

And the world that we live in is common to you, because it's the one you're born in, but it is very new, very recent, and very godless. The result is today that people are extending their adolescence. Especially 18 to 34-year-old males. Statistically, the least likely person to go to church is a man who's 18 to 34.

That tends to be who we focus on. That tends to be our absolute focus. And in that, if you're here and you're an 18 to 34-year-old single male, you are a miracle just by virtue of being here. Congratulations.

After the morning services, I had a handful of mothers grab me and grandmothers grab me, say, "You know what? My husband left. You're right. I was a Christian, he wasn't. He dumped me. It didn't work out. I was foolish. My son didn't know the Lord, but he's met Jesus here. He's walking with God." or "He's engaged to a nice gal, and I praise God for Mars Hill."

And I love hearing those stories, because that's a big reason why we're here, is to get young men and to get them to become men. Because they're – they've got the freedom of men, but they have the mindset of boys. Paul says in I Corinthians 13, "When I was a boy, when I was a child, I thought like a child. I acted like a child. I spoke like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me, and I became a man."

Too many boys have men's bodies, have men's incomes, and have boy's attitudes. The result is today that the average man, 18 to 34, spends 2 hours and 43 minutes a day playing video games – 2 hours and 43 minutes a day playing video games.

~~In 1960, the average man was 19. Today, he's 24½. People are waiting longer to marry. And that may not necessarily be bad, but in there, they're sinning, they're living together, they're sleeping together, they're enjoying the benefits of marriage without any of the obligations.~~

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So much so, that in 1970, 36 percent of Americans were single. Today it's 50 percent. For the first time in the nation's history, there are slightly more unmarried than married people in America. And the church has been usually the slowest to catch up. So, most churches say, "We're family friendly." Well, that's about half of America. The other half is unmarried, not yet family.

And churches like ours really want to be a place that opens the door to those who are unmarried. Furthermore, here's what is happening. People hook up. You know, this friends with benefits. Men are into scoring, not marrying. Thirty-three (33) percent of all births are to unmarried women – people sleeping together, but don't want to be married.

Forty (40) percent of children at some point are in a cohabitating home. Usually a single mom with some deadbeat boyfriend who moves in to take advantage of the single mom. Timothy is a letter in the New Testament where Paul talks about those kind of guys being the worst kinds of men.

Forty-one (41) percent of women 15 to 44 have cohabitated, shacked up at some point with a guy they're not married to. Some of you who are here, that's exactly what you're doing. You're living and sleeping together. It's a sin. I've heard every excuse in the book, "We're married in God's eyes." No, you're not.

I've heard guys say, "Well, that's your interpretation." Well, ladies, I would just simply submit to you that if his interpretation results in you being naked, maybe he's not the most objective Bible interpreter. Just perhaps. Maybe you want to go with my interpretation, which is dump him.

(Laughter)

Cohabitation is up 72 percent between 1990 and the year 2000. Up ten-fold from 1960 to 2000. Seattle, according to the 2000 census, has 250 percent higher cohabitation rate than the national average, so it's a huge issue at Mars Hill. And you guys know the problem – chat rooms online, text messaging.

We live in a culture where you could just advertise online. There's 1,500 people right now at Craig's List welcoming you for a casual encounter. I mean, it's a very perverted, aggressive culture, and if you live like people in the city, you're going to live a life of sin and folly and rebellion.

And the myth is, that if you do these kind of things, like sleeping and living together, that will help you have a better marriage, which is a lie. Because statistically, if you live together and then marry, your odds of divorce are higher than those who do not sleep and live together prior to their marriage.

The result is that some European nations just accept divorce, saying, "Well, it's just never gonna work." So, they've invented a form of marriage that expires at a certain couple of years, like a driver's license. So, you get married, but it's only for like four years, and then you can re-up or let it go. There's no concept that marriage would be one man, one woman, one flesh, one lifetime.

The result is – I would say that the Bible says, you know, men, leave your mother and father, unite to your wife, become one flesh. That's the three-fold process. Our culture is hook up, shack up, break up. That's our culture. Hook up, shack up, break up – repeat. Repeat. Some of you are here. Sexually, it's devastating. Emotionally, it's devastating. Particularly if you know Jesus, it's a guilt-ridden conscience, and it's a lonely life, always wondering if there isn't something better. And there is.

Now, saying that will allow us to move on to the fourth option, which is Christian dating. Now, in this, it's dating redeemed. It's dating by biblical principles. It's dating for people who do love Jesus. The first difference is that Christian dating has as its ultimate goal getting married.

The goal is not just to have a good time; it's to have a good legacy. The goal is not just to not be lonely and have a relationship; the goal is to be in the covenant of marriage with one person for the rest of your life, faithful to one another.

Courtship again works, oftentimes, for people who are younger. People who still live with their folks, or near their folks, or their folks are godly. Christian dating works for people who don't live near their folks; their folks aren't godly; their folks are not involved.

Christian dating would be, for example, effective for a friend of Grace and mine, who recently married. She was in her 40s. She loved Jesus. She was a virgin when she got married, a mature Christian, a member of this church. And she'd lived on her own for years, owned her own house, had her own job.

All right? It didn't make any sense for her to not make her own decision. And what happens for some churches who only use courtship, they get really bizarre and legalistic. So, like the 45-year-old single woman who loves Jesus and doesn't have a Christian family, all of a sudden the church starts assigning one for her, which gets really cultish and weird, mandating sort of, "This is your new family."

There's nothing in the Bible about that. Okay, what we would say is, those who date as mature Christians, it's good to have your family, your friends, your church, lots of counsel, lots of people involved. But ultimately, you're an adult. This is a decision you get to make.

I would base this on I Corinthians 7. And while you're turning there, I won't deal with the whole chapter, it is online. I preached it in the book of I Corinthians. I'll just hit a few highlights. But if you're here and you want to marry as a Christian, definitely if you are a woman, statistically you're at a disadvantage, because 60 percent of Christians are female, only 40 percent are male.

But if you're at Mars Hill, actually, it's 50 percent male, 50 percent female, 50 percent single, 50 percent married. So, we're one of the only churches in America where there's as many single women as there are single men. So, you're in a good spot statistically.

That's why some of you are here. You ladies are like, "I was in that church, and it was me and all my girlfriends, it was really nice. But eventually, we realized there was no fish in the pond. You know? So, we decided to go elsewhere." Welcome to Mars Hill. We love ya. God bless ya. Gentlemen, get to it.

(Laughter)

All right, I Corinthians 7. I Corinthians 7, here's what he has to say, "Now, concerning the matters about which you wrote," – so they had questions for their pastor, as you guys have asked me this question – "it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." Let me stress this – do not have sexual relations with a woman unless she is your wife. And then, please do.

And in this, I get guys all the time asking, "Uh, what constitutes sexual relations?" Well, intercourse of any sort or kind, and any sort of outercourse. Right? So, text messaging, touching each other, making out, naughty e-mails, phone calls, whatever coursing you do – text coursing, e-mail coursing, touch coursing, talk coursing, intercoursing, outercoursing. No coursing of any sort or kind, of course.

(Laughter)

“Can I touch her –” No, you can’t – ever.

(Laughter)

“Til you’re married. Verse 2, “But, because of the temptation to sexual immorality” – right? Now, don’t raise your hand, but how many of you say, “Yes, I understand this sexual temptation. I am not going to be chaste for the rest of my life. I have strong desires. I think I need to get married.” Yes, you do.

“Each one should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.” If you have strong biological desires for intimacy, if you’re a lady, you need a husband. If you’re a gentleman, you need a wife. And in marriage, you don’t deny one another. You have a lot of fun. It doesn’t feel like one is winning and one is losing. You’re both satisfied. You take care of one another. And God’s answer for your desires is marriage. That’s his answer.

“For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his body, but the wife does.” Once you get married, you take care of one another. She wants to snuggle – you’re snuggling. He wants to be together – you’re gonna be together. That’s biblical. Pastor Mark said so.

Verse 5, “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by mutual agreement, for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of a lack of self-control.” If one person in the marriage always feels like they’re on offense, and the other is always on defense, and one always has desires, and the other is always getting declined, Satan is going to destroy the marriage with bitterness and temptation.

You should take care of each other in every way, including the physical. “Now, as a concession,” he says, “not as 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, one of another. To the unmarried and to 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.”

Here’s the big idea. First you’ve gotta ask yourself if you’re single, “Do I have the gift of singleness?” Some people do. Jeremiah did. Paul, who wrote this letter, did. The Lord Jesus did. You don’t have to be married. You’re content being single. Maybe God would call you to an extreme form of ministry, where it’s even dangerous – maybe you’re a missionary to a closed Muslim country, or you need to take a vow of poverty to live your life to help those in need. Cool. God bless ya.

Some people have the gift of singleness for a season, until they’re married. Some have it for a lifetime. If you don’t have that gift, you’re the person saying, “I can’t be single for the rest of my life. I’m gonna have a family, with or without a spouse. I mean, I’m not gonna make it.” Well, then, you need to get married.

You need to marry someone who loves Jesus, that you love, and God’s answer for you is marriage – is marriage. And again, statistically, 91 percent of you will marry. Now, the Bible does give some form of courtship as well as prearranged marriage, but for those who are older, godly, mature singles, I can’t go through all of I Corinthians 7, but I will just hit this verse 36, where he says, “If anyone thinks he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed” – so a man toward his fiancée – “if his passions are strong” – right?

He’s really wanting to keep his hands to himself, but it’s becoming less and less easy for him to do so, and it has to be, “let him” – what? – “let him do as he wishes, it is not a sin. Whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity, but having his desire under control and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well.”

Here’s what he’s saying, “If you’re mature, if you’re godly, if you’re an adult, if you love Jesus, find someone who you love. Find someone who loves you, and together you love Jesus. And you know what? Marry them. Do what you want to do. Do what you want to do, with certain criteria. That’s Christian dating.

Get to know one another, and if it gets serious, go ahead and get married. Seek counsel? Of course. But it’s a little different when you’re a 40-year-old woman who’s been on her own for 20 years, and her parents don’t know Jesus, and you’re a 19-year-old gal who’s still living with her dad. And her dad really loves Jesus, like it will be with my girls.

So courtship works for some. Christian dating works for others. Does this make sense? I want to establish this. It’s not dating as the world does it. I’ll give you some principles now for how to do it as a Christian.

First principle, maximize your singleness for God. If you are single, read, study, grow, pray, serve, do ministry, help those in need. Right? Make it count. You got free time, use it. And the cool thing is at Mars Hill, and I seriously want to say this, “Thank you to all those who are single – our ushers, greeters, set up, tear down, volunteers, children’s ministry.” Without single people, Mars Hill Church does not exist, because they are the bulk of volunteer manpower and womanpower. They just are.

And so, even in the children’s ministry, it’s tons of single people. And I would even say, if you’re a single guy, serve in the children’s ministry. Right? I mean, it’s a great place for a guy who says, “I want to get married, and I want to be a dad. I’ll go practice on their kids.” You know? It’s great.

And you know what? There’s beautiful gals in there, too, who love Jesus. And if the two of you are playing with kids, you’re almost there.

(Laughter)

You know? You're like, "Hey, you like this? This is nice. So, we could do this, you and me."

(Laughter)

Number two, do not pursue a relationship until you're in a season of life when you're ready to marry. Right? If you're, let's say, in your sophomore year of your undergrad work, gentlemen, and your goal is to graduate and then go to medical school and become a doctor so you can take care of your family – well, then it's gonna be a long time before you could probably get married. So, it's not time to pursue a serious relationship.

If you're still overcoming drugs or alcohol addiction, you're not ready for marriage. So, don't start a relationship. If you still can't get a job, find a job, keep a job, gentlemen, you're just not ready. It's not the right season.

Right? If you can't stop smoking weed – I mean, good golly. You're not ready to get married. And some of you say, "Well, if I had a wife, then she would help me." No, she'd be your mom, "Johnny, get up. Stop smoking weed. Where's your pants. Go to work." You know?

(Laughter)

If we find that, we're gonna come to your house. We're gonna video how we mock you.

(Laughter)

Number three, be reasonable with your expectations. Don't set your expectations too high. Some people's expectations are ridiculous. Some women, if Jesus showed up, would be like, "I don't like facial hair."

(Laughter)

It's just crazy, you know? Be reasonable. Right? And some set their expectations way too low. I talked to a gal not too long ago. She was engaged to this guy who's a loser. And I said, "Why are you engaged to that guy?" She said, "He asked."

(Laughter)

Wow, so he's breathing and can talk. I would hope you'd have at least one or two other things on your list of requirements. You know? I mean – I said, "Look, just 'cause he asked," I said, "you gotta have a little more expectation than that." You can't set your standards too low and settle. You also can't set 'em so high that there is no way in the world you'll find this perfect person. It's just not gonna happen.

Number four, this will help those of you who are single. A date is not dating. A date is when you have coffee, or go out to dinner. You know? Or sit down somewhere and eat, where it's food not cooked by a high school kid in a uniform. You know? It's sitting down and being together. It's a date. You can go on a date.

And Mars Hill people freak out about this, "But if we go on a date, don't we need to get engaged?" If I go for coffee, "Do I want caffeinated or decaffeinated? Here's your ring." Look, it's too early for that, okay? It's too early for that.

I Timothy 5 says to treat younger women like – what? – sisters. Can you talk to your sister? I do. Can you eat a meal with your sister? You can. Can you have coffee with your sister? Yeah. Can you enjoy her company? Yeah. Well, what about your sisters in Christ? Yeah. It doesn't need to be all sexually charged and confusing.

That means you can go on a date. And if you become a couple, now you're dating. We'll call that Christian dating. We're a couple. We're seeing one another. We're working toward the possibility of maybe we'll go through the premarital class and get engaged and be married. We're seeing. But it starts with a date.

And, gentlemen, let me say this, if you're going to take a gal out on a date, do not take her to a concert. Right? 'Cause you can't talk, and you'll be yelling at each other, and that's no way to start a relationship. And don't take her to a movie, 'cause you can't talk, 'cause ladies, what do you want to do? You want to talk. You got a lot of questions.

And if he takes you to a place where you can't talk, you can't really get to know each other. So, gentlemen, a date – a date is very important. So, gentlemen, to get a date, here's my next point. He initiates, she responds. Right? Gentlemen, you have got to have a little courage. Right?

You've got to walk up, "Hello." Right? And do this right. Shirt with buttons, breath mint, two eyebrows – think it through. Right?

(Laughter)

Have a plan. Have a plan. "Hello, I was wondering, would you like to go to a cup of coffee? Would you like to go catch a bite to eat? Some friends and I are going out to dinner after church, or out to do something, would you care to join us? We would enjoy your company." Ask.

And ladies, you could say, "Yes." Or you could say, "No." If you're not interested, say, "No." Say, "No." You're like, "I don't want to hurt his feelings." Well, when you dump him in two weeks, [Chuckle] it won't be any better. Okay? I mean, he's, "I'm in, I'm in, I'm in." "Psyche." "I'm out?" You know, just be nice about it.

And, gentlemen, respect the answer. Now, as well, gentlemen, what this means is, you've gotta initiate, and you've gotta accept the fact that you may be

rejected. And the cowardly men try to work through the girlfriend of the friend. Right? They try to get to the girl through her friend. So, they'll go, "Uh, could you ask your friend if maybe she would pray about going out with me?"

Ladies, if some guy puts you in that spot, here's what you say, "Get on your bike and ride home, little boy."

(Laughter)

That's the answer.

[Applause]

That's ridiculous. "She might reject me." Well, she should. You're pathetic. You have no game at all. You're a man! Be a man! That's what they like anyways. Anyways – and guys always argue with me on this. I always get single guys after a sermon, like, "I don't agree." I'm like, "You don't have a wife. You don't know anything. You're like a dog chasing a fire truck. If you caught it, you wouldn't know what to do with it. You shouldn't talk. You don't know what you're talking about."

(Laughter)

How about this one? Do not date or go on a date with anyone who's not a Christian. If the whole goal is, "I'd like to meet somebody to marry" – and the first date is not, "Are we gonna get married?" [Chuckle] If somebody asks that, pretend like you're going to the bathroom. Get in your car and drive home. I mean, it's a little early.

(Laughter)

But if they're not a Christian, you're not gonna – don't even start. Right? And some people say, "But they believe in God." James says even demons do, and I would encourage you not to date one.

(Laughter)

You're gonna need more than that. II Corinthians 6:4, right, "Do not be unequally yoked." If you love Jesus, you want somebody that loves Jesus. And if they don't love Jesus, they're not going to understand you. You can't pray with them, read the Bible with them, grow in Christ with them. It's not gonna be a good marriage. And, it's gonna be really confusing when you have kids. Mom and dad don't worship the same God, don't have the same authority, don't have the same beliefs and values. What a nightmare. No, no, no, no, no.

And some of you gals will be like, "But he'll go to church with me if I sleep with him." Oh, great. Boy, that's great. That's awesome. That's incredible. That's so helpful. What a great witness. No! A man needs to love Jesus, and then a woman needs to love Jesus, and then that man and woman can love Jesus together.

And the relationship needs to make you more holy, but it doesn't need to be the beginning of your relationship with Jesus. You need to have your own relationship with Jesus. And this includes marrying someone who has equal theological convictions. What kind of church do you want to go to? Right? What is your doctrine?

If you're the charismatic gal who loves to pray in tongues, and you're the real hard-core fundamental guy who thinks that all people who speak in tongues are demon possessed, it's gonna be really weird at your family dinner table. Right?

(Laughter)

Right? The kids'll be sitting there, and mom will be like, "Shakada, hakada, makada," and dad's gonna be casting a demon out of her –

(Laughter)

And the kids are all gonna be crying. So, it can't – you guys get my point. You gotta agree on stuff. Right?

(Laughter)

It can't just be, "We're Christians." You gotta be kinda on the same team, having the same doctrinal convictions. You know what I'm talking about.

How about this one? Only date one person at a time. Right? It's not buckshot.

(Laughter)

You know? Go to Mars Hill, be like, "I'm gonna ask 20. I'm sure I'm gonna get four, and one of these might be my wife." Nope, don't do that. One at a time.

How about this one? Look at who God puts in front of you. Look at who God puts in front of you. Right? This is Ruth. Boaz is out living his life, and God puts Ruth in front of him. And eventually, he looks, "Oh, there's Ruth." Right? Whole book's online. You could listen to it.

But how many of you guys are overlooking certain women? You're overlooking. Look at who's in front of you. Who's in your community group? Who's in your church? Who's in your circle of friends? Who's on your serving ministry team? Who's there? Who's God put right in front of you?

Look at them. Pay attention. You may be overlooking the obvious.

How about this one? Feel free to use technology wisely. Internet dating is not a sin. Be careful, you could end up with a stalker. You could end up with – like, you know, if somebody's like, "Hey, I'll meet you in this lonely, quiet place." "No, no, no, we meet in public, and maybe I'm bringing a friend first time." Okay? But Internet dating is not a sin.

I know some people who love Jesus. They met some great people who love Jesus. And they have great marriages. I would say, "Just be careful. Just be careful how you present yourself, and be careful who you give out information to. Just be prudent and wise." What we would not say – I would not say that Internet dating is a sin. It's just another way to meet people.

How about this one? Only invest in a relationship with someone that you are attracted to. Is this physical? Yes, you're gonna need to look at them for a long time.

(Laughter)

Is this mental? Yes. Right? If you have certain interests, and you like to read, and you're a big theologian, or you're a person who digs footnotes, and they're like, "It's got no pictures," it may not be mentally the most attractive relationship. You know? If you're a person – are you attracted to them emotionally? Right? Like you trust them; you feel close to them; you see emotional maturity; there's a heartfelt connection.

Is there a spiritual connection? You both love Jesus, you have these same convictions, desires, attitudes toward life? And it's this total attraction. What about their hobbies? Right? If they love horseback riding. Do you hate horseback riding? If they love hunting. I mean, good Lord, I mean, if you're a woman who loves hunting – right? I mean, you're alone, but okay.

(Laughter)

I mean, it's just – what are your hobbies and your desires? Are you totally attracted to this person? The physical is part, but it's total attraction. Right? 'Cause some people like – they've got like weird, quirky laughs. Right? Some people, they'll laugh so weird, and it could annoy you. And if it does, that'll be a long life. Right? And you'll never tell a joke. And you'll stop going to this church. Like, "I can't even hear it in church. Mark tells a joke, and it's, [high-pitched squealing laugh] I can't handle that."

(Laughter)

There's someone else out there who's like, "That is so cute." That's the one! Right there, that's the one.

Only marry someone who agrees with you on issues of gender and family. Right? If you're a guy – like this is Grace and I, I always tell this story, but I always have single guys ask me, like, "How do you get Grace to do that?" I said, "What?" "Well, she loves you, and she loves the kids, and she stays home to be a mom." And I always say, "It's not like we arm wrestled and she lost." You know? "Ha-ha-ha, you're pregnant, go home."

(Laughter)

It's not like we did it that way. I shouldn't have said it like that, but you know, you get the point.

(Laughter)

I say – you know, I met her, and I said, "Hey," – we were 19 – I said, "Look, I want to marry you. I feel God's called me to be a pastor. Okay? So, do you want to be a pastor's wife? And I wanna make money, and I want you to stay home, and I wanna have kids, and a big family, and this is what I want. What do you want?"

She said, "That's what I want." "Okay, good. Let's do that together." If she woulda said, "Well, I got my tubes tied at 12, and I won't change my last name, and if you disagree with me, I carry mace," it would be like, "Well, I'm gonna go for Plan B. I'm gonna look for my options."

You've gotta figure out what you want, and then marry someone who agrees with you. Otherwise, life is conflict, and you're not allies working together. You're enemies, always fighting over exactly what it is you're trying to do.

Last one, and then I'll get into questions for men and women, guard your heart. Proverbs 4:23, "Guard your heart" – don't give your heart away too quick. Especially you ladies. Right? You're out on the first date, don't be thinking, "I wonder what our kids'll look like?" It's too early. Okay? You're too far down the road.

All right? He's thinking, "Uh, her hair's brown." I mean, he's not there yet.

(Laughter)

Right? He's – you're way out ahead. Guard your heart. Don't give it away too quick. Here are some thoughts for Christian men who are into Christian dating. Are you overlooking, gentlemen, good women? Because sometimes the good women are single moms. Sometimes the good women are divorced – another man fell down on his responsibilities, or that woman has really changed since her previous marriage.

Some women are just shy. They don't pop and stick out because they're a little more quiet and reserved. Are you overlooking some really godly women? Gentlemen, as well, when you're with her, do you honor God? Like if Jesus was there, would you be acting the same way? Do you honor

her? Do you honor her family? Do you honor her friends? Do you honor her church and a relational community, her social network?

See, a godly woman has lots of relationships around her, people who love Jesus and love her. And a good man enters into those relationships. Says, "I'd love to meet your family and your friends and go to your community group Bible study, and go to church with ya, and get to know the people who love you, and see who you work with. He wants to know your world, and he wants to enter into it, because he has nothing to hide.

A bad guy wants to take a woman out of a good social network, isolate her from family, friends, church, Bible study – get her isolated – bad guy. Gentlemen, are you honoring her? Are you going into her world, and also earning the favor of those who love her? That's important.

How about this one? Number three, is she modest? I Timothy 2:9 says, "Ladies, dress modestly." All right? Gentlemen, if you're in the club – right? – you're at the single's bar, in walks the gal whose neckline and hemline meet, and all the guys are like, "Wow, look at that." Okay? She might be a good time, but she's not a good life, and she's not a good legacy. Right?

You gotta think, if she's immodest and she loves attention, it's not just my attention. She loves everyone's attention. Is this the kind of wife I want to spend my life with? No, if she's immodest, then I would say there's something wrong. She's not going to be satisfied with your affection. She loves all the male attention.

Number four, the Bible says that the man is to be the head, the loving leader, like Jesus, of the family. So, gentlemen, if you're interested in a woman, will she follow your leadership? Can you lead her? If she's really smart and you're very not, is she going to trust you to make decisions? Right?

If you're really disorganized, she's really organized; if she's really mature, you're really immature, can you actually lead? Is she gonna trust you? Is she gonna feel safe with you? Is she gonna be with you? Can you lead her? If not, you need to step up your game, or you need to find someone who you can lead.

Number five, does she have noble character? Proverbs 31, "Charm is deceptive; beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears God is to be praised." Character counts. I'll tell you what, gentlemen, you're gonna give your whole life to one woman. You're gonna marry her, have children with her, work for her, provide for her, protect her, pray for her. Does she have character? Does she love God? Does she hate evil? Is she humble? Is she teachable? Is she wise?

Proverbs says, "A prudent wife is from the Lord." Genesis 2:18 says that she's to be a helper. I mean, does she have that kind of character? The kind of character when you introduce her to people, you feel in a right way proud, "Let me introduce you to her. Here she is. She's great. She's got amazing character I totally adore. It's an honor to be with her. It's an honor to be with her. I'm a better man just by knowing her. She's changing me. She's making me more holy, just by being with her. She's got amazing character." You want that kind of woman. You want that kind of woman, and that's what we want for ya.

Number six, can you provide for her the lifestyle she expects? I Timothy 5:8, "If a man does not provide for the needs of his family, he's denied the faith, and he's worse than an unbeliever." Right? If you're an average, hard-working, blue-collar guy, like my dad and like Jesus – right? – and you meet a gal, and she comes from affluence, or she wants to live in affluence, and she says, "I want a new house. I want a new car. I want a vacation home," and you're like, "Ooh, I don't think I'm gonna make that kind of money."

Every man needs to take care of his family financially. But if she has certain expectations that you're not going to be able to meet, then that's not the woman for you, because that difference between her expectations and your provision will be conflict and disappointment.

And number seven, is she like the negative women in Proverbs? Is she a nag? Proverbs says that a nagging wife is like a dripping faucet. Right? In war time, they'll use that as torture for a POW. Okay?

(Laughter)

It's water torture – drip, drip, drip. It says that a quarrelsome wife, in Proverbs, living with her is worse than living on the corner of the roof of your own home. It's better to just take all your camping gear, go up on a roof, and just hope for the best. It's better than living in the house with a woman who's all about fighting and arguing and just constant conflict.

There's also a woman in Proverbs who is unfaithful. When her husband goes to work, she gets all dressed up and goes out looking for other guys. There's also a woman in Proverbs who's called "foolish," and she's loud. She's overbearing. Is she like that?

Now, here's why some good men are attracted to some bad women. It's a savior/hero complex. The women have this as well. Sometimes the best women are attracted to the worst men. Why? It's because they believe that they should do the work of Jesus – run in, rescue them, be the savior, save the day, fix them, change them. That's Jesus' job. That's Jesus' job.

Some of you are looking for worst-case scenarios so that you can be Jesus. You're not Jesus. They need Jesus, but you're not him.

Ladies, some thoughts for you. Do you want to help this man who's interested you, and join him in his course of life? Genesis 2:18 says, "The woman is the helper." I Corinthians 11:9 says, "The man was not made for the woman, but the woman was made for the man." That means the man knows what he wants.

He says, "Here's the job I'm working. Here's what I want. Here's where I'm going. Here's my plan." All right? That's why marriage is for men, not

for boys. And then he could tell the woman, "Here's what I'm doing. You seem like a great gal. Would you be interested in this? If not, then our relationship doesn't have a future."

Here's what I told Grace, "I'm gonna be a pastor. I'm gonna plant a church. I'm gonna preach the Bible. Are you cool with that? Do you want that, or not?" She said, "Yeah, my dad was a pastor. I love Jesus. I love the church. That sounds great." "Perfect, perfect."

If you're a man who's gonna travel, 'cause you're gonna be a salesman, you better find a woman who says, "I'm okay with you being gone," 'cause you're gonna be gone some. Right? It's a man knowing what he's doing, and then inviting a woman to participate or not. And a woman has a right to make her decision at that level.

Number two, is he tough enough to remain tough in tough times? All right, Paul says in I Timothy 2:3 to "Endure hardship like a good soldier." I mean, life gets hard. I'll tell you what, gentlemen, when you say, "That's it. We're gonna love Jesus. We're gonna plant our flag. I'm gonna love this woman. I'm gonna be faithful to her. We're gonna have kids. I'm gonna pay the bills. I'm gonna serve in my church, and I'm gonna do this for the rest of my life – for 50, 60, 70 years, whatever God would give me," it's a big deal. You've got a lot of responsibility.

If you're a guy who doesn't like responsibility, folds under pressure, can't make a plan, doesn't follow things through, lets things fall through cracks, you're gonna ruin everything. You're gonna hurt that woman and the children that God would entrust to your care. So, the woman needs to ask, "When it gets tough, do I depend on – is he gonna do his job?"

I mean, I talked to a guy today. They've got a little kid. He's working full-time. His wife's on bed rest. She's really sick, so he works a full-time job, comes home, takes care of his wife, takes care of his kid, does ministry. He has got a full load. But you know what? He's carrying it. He loves her; he's carrying it.

There will be seasons in life where the load is heavy. And gentlemen, as the leader and head of the home, you've gotta carry that load. And ladies, if he can't carry the load – like right now, seriously, if you gotta help him find a job, keep a job, help him keep sober, make sure he reads his Bible, drag him to church, push him to Bible study – there's no way in the world he could handle husband and father as a Christian – no way. No way.

How about this one, number three, is he considerate and gentle with me? I Peter 3:7, Peter says, "Men, do not be harsh with your wife." Does he scream at you? 'Cause you know what, ladies, when you're dating, he's on his best behavior. It's only gonna get worse.

Has he raised his hand to you? You say, "Well, he didn't hit me." Did he threaten to? Has he physically assaulted you? Has he sexually imposed on you? Do you feel safe with him, or do you feel danger? If you feel danger – see, intimacy is about trust, and trust is about safety. So, if you're not safe, there isn't trust, there won't be intimacy.

If you don't feel safe, don't be with that guy. You say, "Well, he only hit me once, but it's 'cause I made him really angry." Don't blame yourself. Whatever you said or did, it may have been sinful, but his hitting you, screaming at you, cheating on you, whatever it is, violence toward you – there's no excuse. It's inexcusable. In fact, if he hits you, it's a crime. Call the cops. Don't marry him, get a restraining order. All right? Do you feel safe? Do you feel safe with this guy?

How about this one, number four, will he be a good daddy? Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, raise your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." If you're a lady who wants to have kids, does he love kids? There's three kind of guys – guys who don't want kids; guys who will have kids, but they give them to the wife and they say, "Well, she wants babies, and I'll give her babies, that's her deal;" and there's guys who say, "I want to be a daddy. I love kids, and I wanna be a daddy.

Is he gonna be a great dad? How does he treat little kids right now? Does he go to a community group where there's kids, and he loves 'em? Is he good to his nieces and nephews if he has 'em? Does he volunteer in the children's ministry? I mean, is he a guy who already you can see in his heart he's gonna be a great daddy?

I mean, if you're gonna have babies with this guy, you better make sure he's gonna be a great dad. 'Cause see, when you're single, all you're thinking about is, "Ah, I think we could make it." Put kids into the equation. That's a whole nother thing you're looking for – not just a spouse, but a parent as well.

Now, the good thing about many of the Mars Hill men, I'll tell you this, this is one of the things that does encourage me, there's an attitude toward children that is different from the rest of the city. Most of the young guys in this church who have been here a while are saying, "You know what? God has put these deep desires in my heart. I wanna love my wife, wanna have kids, and I wanna be a good husband and father." That's a good thing.

But there's enough good men that, ladies, you don't need a man, and you shouldn't allow any man to grab your heart or your life who doesn't love you, love Jesus, and also want to love the children that God would entrust to your care.

A couple more. Ladies, is he a one-woman man? I Timothy 3:2 says, "The qualification of an elder is a one-woman man," and that all men are to follow the example of the elders. If he's still looking at porn, he's not a one-woman man. If he's got two or three girls he's seeing at the same time, he's not a one-woman man.

If he's very flirtatious with other women, he's not a one-woman man. If you're having dinner and every woman who walks by, he gets whiplash, he's not a one-woman man. If he cheats on you while you're dating him, he's not a one-woman man. He's not.

You want a man who says Job 31:1, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look upon a woman lustfully." You want him to love you, desire you, pursue you, be into you, be attracted to you, nothing else.

And some women, then, get this crazy idea, like they're in competition with another woman, "Oh, I need to be more sexy. I need to be more available. I need to touch him more. I need to let him sin with me, so that he'll be attracted to me." No, no, no. There's a problem in his heart, it's not with you.

If he loves you, he'll be all about you. And if he doesn't love you, there may be nothing wrong with you, he just may have a lot of sin and folly in his heart. He may be a boy and not a man. You want a one-woman man. That's what you want.

Last few, number six, how valuable are you to him? If he's not willing to finish school, if he's not willing to get a job, if he's not willing to move out of his parents' house, if he's not willing to get his act together, if he's not willing to attend church on his own, if he's not willing to read the Bible on his own, if he's not willing to serve God on his own, how important are you? How important are you?

You know, there was the story of the Titanic, when the ship went down some years ago, you remember when the ship was going down, what was the cry of the men? "Women and children first." There was a women's magazine did a similar poll a few years ago saying, "If the Titanic went down today, what do you think should happen?" And the readers, the women who voted said, "Half men, half women should have been put on the boat so it could be equality."

Look if you're a Mars Hill man, you die. Okay? That's the bottom line. You die with a smile on your face, and a verse on your heart, "Hey, I love my wife as Christ loved the Church. He died for his bride, the Church, I die for my bride." Gotta ask yourself, ladies, really, how much of a treasure are you? Really, at the end of the day, would he die for you gladly? Does he care about you that much?

A Mars Hill man, even if he gets the ticket for the boat, hands it to a lady and says, "God bless you, you're my wife. I die, you live. I'll tell Jesus you said, 'Hi.'" Right? That's how it goes. A man lives to be like Jesus, and give everything for his wife and for their children. Period. How valuable are you to him?

I say this, not in a boasting way, but at 21 I wanted to marry Grace. Right? We're still between our junior and senior year at college. That meant during the summer, I had to work 2 shifts, 16 hours a day. We got married, that meant I worked a full-time job and I was married and I took 18 credits in college. And I studied for ministry under my pastor. Why? 'Cause I had to be with Grace. I wanted to be with Grace. She was a treasure, and it just – I couldn't live without her; that's why.

And if you really love a woman, you'll make it happen. And too many of you ladies, you make it too easy. Make him earn it. Make him earn it. And if he loves you, he will. And if he's a man, he will. And if he's a man who's earned it, he'll honor you because he has proven himself.

And if he's unwilling to, then you don't want to be with him, because if he's unwilling to prove himself today, he won't continue to prove himself for the rest of his life.

And then the last one, ladies, do you want your sons to be like him? Do you want your daughters to marry someone like him? I would say the same is true, conversely, for the men. This woman you're interested in, do you want your daughters to be like her? Do you want your sons to marry someone like her, because they will.

You want to marry someone where you could say, "I want you to be like your daddy. Girls, I want you to grow up and marry someone like your daddy." Men, you want the same thing. You want to be able to tell your daughters, "I want you to be like your mama." You wanna tell your sons, "You wanna marry a nice lady, marry someone like your mom." That's what you want to say. So, you don't just have a great time – you have a great legacy.

I'll close with these thoughts. First, do not have any sexual contact before marriage. No sexual contact of any sort or kind. Don't. It says in the Bible, "Among God's people there shouldn't even be a hint of sexual immorality." Not even a hint.

Song of Solomon says, "Don't arouse or awaken love until it's time." It's not, "How far can I go," it's, "When do I start?" And you start when you're married. Now, that doesn't mean you don't build intimacy, because you do. You go on a date, a couple, you say, "We like each other. Are we a couple? Can we date?" "Yes."

Okay, then it moves to the next level, "Have we been together a little while? We care about each other. It seems like a good fit. The godly people we seek for counsel sign off. How about if we take a premarital class at Mars Hill? Yeah, you know, I really think we are a good fit, and I think we need to get engaged, and I think we need to get married."

As the relationship moves along, you do build intimacy. You build it mentally. You're talking about deeper things. You build it emotionally, you're sharing deeper issues. You build it physically. You hold hands, you sit together, you snuggle, maybe you even kiss. Not in a make-out session to where it becomes, you know, very tempting to go further.

But, intimacy is built until you're married, and then that physical, mental, spiritual intimacy culminates in sexual intimacy – because there's love, and there's trust, and there's connection. And that's what God intends.

Some of you are here today, you're single. You're dating someone you shouldn't. You've already been in it too long. You need to break up with them tonight. And you know it in your heart, and I'm just giving you permission to say, "We've done this all wrong. Neither of us are ready. This is a nightmare."

Some of you are here and you've lacked courage and confidence, particularly you men. It's time to repent of your cowardice. Some of you are here, and you're married, and you're realizing that your past sin is in the roots, and it's really affected the fruit of your marriage. And maybe you've gotta talk about your past and your sin and how you got into your relationship, and what you did in other relationships before you met this person.

And sometimes it's the past that really does affect the future, and you gotta talk that through. The good news is this. Not only is Jesus our perfect example of a sinless, single man – he's God, who never sinned – he's also our substitute, who dies to take away all of our sins, and he rises to give us new life.

So, here's the good news. There is new life in Jesus. I'm a guy who didn't do this all perfect. I met Grace at 17. I got saved at 19. It was all wrong, and then we had to fix everything. But by God's grace, we did; and we love each other. And we've got a good marriage, by God's grace.

I'm telling you that Jesus loves to help sinners straighten out messes they've made, and I'm evidence of that. So, if you're here today, give your sin to Jesus in prayer. Receive his forgiveness. Commit yourself to living as a Christian, and commit yourself to honoring Jesus in your relationships and the counsel you afford others.

When you're ready, you can respond by taking communion. All who are Christians are welcome. That's where we remember the body and blood of Jesus, that takes away sin. We'll give our tithes and offerings, as part of our act of worship, and we'll celebrate with singing. Why? Because the good news is this. Jesus has a better way of life for us. He has a better way of life for us, and he invites us to a relationship with him that then will transform all the other relationships that we have.

And I want you to have that. Okay? Hear me on this, this is my heart. I really want you to have that, because next to who your God is, who you marry is the most important decision you make. We want you to marry the right person, at the right time, for the right reason, in the right way. Because we want the best for you. That's why. Let me pray.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came to this earth, and though you were single, you did not sin. You had friendships with women, like sisters – women like Mary and Martha. And, Lord Jesus, I pray for us who are single that we would follow your example. God, for those of us who have already sinned, I pray that we would have hearts and lives of repentance.

For those of us who are married, and many of our marital problems are the result of our premarital relationships, I pray, Lord God, for honest confession and repentance. And, Jesus, I pray for my friends, that they would not settle. That they also would not become so idealistic that they're unreasonable. I ask for wisdom.

Lord God, for those who are parents, as I am, I pray that we'd be able to exercise Christian courtship, and to protect our children and love them, and encourage them, and help them, and serve them.

For those, Lord God, who are older singles, or don't have godly families, I pray this church would be a safe place for them to have good counsel and care. But I pray that ultimately, Lord God, they would have dating to be done in a redeemed way, like I Corinthians 7 speaks of, and that they would make wise decisions by the power of your Spirit.

So, Lord Jesus, we love you. And I thank you that as the city within the city, we get to do things differently. And so, we worship you in great gratitude, amen. Thank you.