

MADE FOR RELATIONSHIP: DATING



Romans 12

KEY TRUTHS

- **Dating relationships can't fulfil us**, not even marriage fully satisfies our needs. We can only truly meet our needs in a relationship with God, who “will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)
- **The first ‘who’ in dating is always God.** Relationships with others are still important, but we should look first and most to God for our needs to be met.
- **Relationships work best when you're pulling in the same direction.** A Christian's primary core value is always “Jesus”, sharing your core values with your partner is essential to a harmonious relationship. We should ask, “Does this person point me to Jesus?”
- **Honour one another.** Partners in a dating relationship should try to “outdo one another in showing honour” (Romans 12:10). We should seek to honour those who are dating; be honest, supportive and present with them.
- **Dating relationships should:**
 - **Be intentional**, directed towards marriage.
 - **Have the characteristics of God**, in mutual behaviour.
 - **Be accountable**, inviting others into it and asking for advice and guidance.
 - **Have grace**, past mistakes don't define us, we live into our future with Jesus.

CULTURAL FALSEHOODS

- Dating is like a hobby, or at most a “try before you buy”.
- It's just a bit of fun – no one can get hurt.
- Dating without sex is for the sexually repressed.
- Dating has replaced marriage, they're basically the same thing now.

START THE CONVERSATION

- Take a moment to name the thing(s) that frustrate you most about this topic, both in how it happens and how people talk about it.
- How has your experience differed around dating and how it's approached within church vs the rest of the world?
 - Are these the distinctions we should expect?
- What are the best and worst stories about dating you have heard? (They could be from your own experience or what you've observed).

GOING DEEPER

- Who doesn't want to feel whole and completed?! The human quest to 'find love' and wholeness in one other person is an impossible task – true fulfilment can only come out of relationship with God, ultimately God's the 'who' of dating.
 - What are the needs we're seeking to meet in our lives? (Things like love, fun, challenge, encouragement, etc.)
 - Are any of these things not 'needs' but 'wants'?
 - What are some of the unhealthy ways we look to meet appropriate needs?
- **Read Romans 12:9-16 together**, what can we learn from this about having the characteristics of God in the way we relate to each other, both in dating and otherwise?
- Talk through the other 'hows' of dating. What's easy and what's difficult here?
 - **Be intentional** - how does the intention of a Christian dating relationship change its character? How can we better define our relationships and help others to do so?
 - **Have the characteristics of God** - we'll come to this a little later...
 - **Be accountable** - what are some good boundaries to set in a dating relationship? What structures can we put in place to help others hold to their own boundaries? Regardless of our relationship status, who are we accountable to, and who is accountable to us?
 - **Have grace** - where do we need to extend grace to others? Where do we need to know and accept the forgiveness of God and allow grace into our lives?
- Dating healthily in the context of a non-judgemental, non-gossippy, supportive, loving and kind church family helps people work out whether a relationship is right.
 - Is that how we are as a church family?
 - What can we do better?
 - Is it possible to have a church where the bar is high, but the pressure is low?
- Given how different a Christian world-view is to the norms of modern culture, it can be really hard to be distinctive and find supportive friends who share your beliefs; this can make a real difference to our well-being. Thinking again about the 'who' of dating, the Bible advises us not to enter into marriage-like relationships with those who don't share our one core value: Jesus. ("Do not be yoked to an unbeliever" - 2 Corinthians 6:14)
 - What do you think about this advice?
 - Are there exceptions to this, and if so, why?
 - Why is it important that our closest friends, especially spouses or dating partners, point us to Jesus?
- God created sex as a good gift, but something just for marriage – a union of difference between a man and a woman. If, as Christians, we believe what the Bible teaches, then sex shouldn't be a part of dating.
 - How does that make you feel? Do you agree, disagree, or a bit of both?
 - How can Christians remain faithful to God and be fully honouring to their dating partners in a culture that has such a different view of the place and significance of sex?
- If God is where we should look to first and most for our needs to be met, then how is your relationship with God? Perhaps in a smaller group setting, find someone you

trust and feel safe with and discuss:

- What's good, what needs improvement?
 - When did you last read your Bible? Do you remember what you were reading about?
 - Is Jesus first in your heart?
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- Pray together. Pray "Come, Holy Spirit". Spend some time celebrating the joy that relationship has brought to those in your group, thank God for the relationship we can have with him through Jesus. Pray for the needs and struggles of your group and ask for God's help as we seek to be distinctly Christian and outdo one another in honour in and around dating.

FURTHER READING

[Loveology](#) | John Mark Comer

[The Meaning of Marriage](#) | Timothy & Kathy Keller