

CGYG – Questions about Dating & Relationships you’ve always wanted to ask...

I) Two important Biblical principles that highlight God’s framework (design) for our lives:

- Before addressing any of the questions, it’s important to set the stage (framework) in the grander scheme of things
- As I reflected on the questions sent to me, I really began to sense the Lord telling me that if we can get these two framework questions right (what Scripture has to say), that the answers to all of our questions become very clear, very apparent
- So here’s the structure of this evening: I would like to highlight the framework of God’s design – i.e. what He has always intended in creating us – then I’ll do my best to share what I believe the Bible has to say about each of your questions

Principle I: God DOES have a way that He wants us to live – it’s found in the Bible, His Word!

- Despite what you may think, God has set very clear, very specific, and very high goals for us in the way we are to live out our lives; Whether you like it or not, God has set the bar for us, and it is a very, very, very high bar
- There is no arena of life that escapes God’s demand on how we are to behave
- As a Christian we’re called to seek God’s ideal in every circumstance; we are NOT given the option to aim for the bare minimum... “what’s the very least I can do just to get away from God’s wrath, or just to remain on the good side of the ‘man upstairs’?”

a. God desires for us to live lives of worship to Him

- o God created us for the sole purpose of worshipping Him
- o That we can experience joy and relationship with Him is a secondary by-product of living in worship of the Almighty God
- o The psalmist declares: “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care.” (Psalm 95:6-7)
- o Again in Psalm 100:2-5 → **“Worship the Lord with gladness**; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever, his faithfulness continues through all generations.”
- o In the Old Testament, God led Moses to go into Egypt and commanded him to lead the nation of Israel out from under the yoke of slavery. But it was so that Israel could be set free to worship their God
 - Moses, 80 years old along with his brother Aaron, 83 years old, comes before the great Egyptian Pharaoh to order him to let their people go. This is what God commands Moses to say: “The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, **so that they may worship me in the desert...**” (Exodus 7:16)
- o God requires from us total devotion to Him, and Him alone
 - In Mark 12, Jesus is asked what the single most important commandment is, to which He replies, “...The most important one... is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. **Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.** The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31)

- This is the very fabric with which we are made... to live for His glory
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31 → “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God**”
 - God is saying that even in the plainest, commonest of activities, we are to live for His glory
 - Which is a greater, more profound human experience... to eat or to fall in love?
- Paul reminds us that **whatever** we do, we are do bring God glory... if you have a pen and your own Bible, you might want to underline that word
- Does ‘dating’ fall within the range of ‘whatever’?

b. God desires that we reflect His character in our lives

- His utmost, untainted, **holiness** (righteousness, purity)
 - His holiness is so pure, the Bible says that God is jealous for His people to obey Him and worship Him alone – God is a ‘consuming fire’
 - Deuteronomy 4:23-24 → “Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD your God **is a consuming fire**, a jealous God.”
 - Picture a pure, blazing, white hot fire – God’s holiness is infinitely beyond the purest thing you can think of
 - The prophet Isaiah declares this very nature of who God is
 - Isaiah 6:1-3 → “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘**Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’”
 - And guess what, God doesn’t just leave it as a nicety; a piece of information we know about Him
 - His command is that we reflect His holiness in our lives:
 - 1 Peter 1:14-16 → “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘**Be holy, because I am holy.**’”
- His sacrificial **love**
 - The Lord Jesus is the ultimate demonstration and proof of God’s sacrificial love
 - John 3:16 → “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
 - We, too, are called to love others completely, totally, utterly sacrificially
 - We are called to love others to the point of being willing to ‘lay down our lives’ for our brother
 - 1 John 3:16 → “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”
 - Did you know that there is no exception to this, for a Christian?
 - Did you know that we are commanded to love each and every person that we know, and that we interact with – both those who love us back, and those who persecute us?

Christ calls us to ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’
(Matthew 5:44)

- Not only love, but love sacrificially – we could have a whole program on what this means!

○ His **truthfulness**

- The Psalmist declares: “Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O Lord the God of truth” (Psalm 31:5)
- John 14:16 → Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
- In God, there is no shadow of deception – He is called the “Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” (James 1:17)
- We are to walk in God’s truth
 - “Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.” – Psalm 86:11
- We are to be lovers of truth

○ His **faithfulness**

- I don’t think I need to elaborate on this – you start from chapter 1 of the very first book of the Bible, and you don’t read very far before you see just how faithful God is to His promises
- Psalm 36:5 → “Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.”
- Psalm 86:15 → “But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”
- Proverbs 3:3 → “Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.”

- So God is holy, He is love, He is truthful, and He is faithful... and He expects us to be all these things, to reflect His very character and attributes...
- But get this... He doesn’t expect a half-effort... His Word goes on to say that we are to be **perfect, just as God is perfect** (Matthew 5:48)
- God expects us to strive for perfection in every area of our lives – just as He is perfect
- These are but four characteristics of God, and it would serve us well to remember these four aspects of that God also expects of us, especially in the context of dating and relationships

Principle II: The chemistry (romance) between a guy and a gal is designed and created by God Himself... and is one of the many gifts He has entrusted us with to enjoy

- But as in all of God’s other gifts to us, this ‘chemistry’ (what we might call romance) is meant to be enjoyed within boundaries that He defines
- It is not meant to replace God as the central desire of our hearts, of our affections
- Rather – like many other blessings – the gift of romance and ultimately of marriage is to point us towards something much more deeply profound than the very relationship itself; it’s meant to point us to God – His goodness as a heavenly Father who provides all good gifts to His children
- Let’s look briefly again at the familiar story (perhaps) of Adam and Eve

- The book of Genesis describes for us the creation account. On the sixth day, God creates what is the ‘crown of His creation’ (in a sense) – He creates man by forming him from the dust of the earth and very intimately breathing life into him.
- All is perfect – except for one thing. Every creature has an equal companion, but for Adam there was no companion to be found – no one his equal.
- God Himself declares, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable helper for him” (Genesis 2:18)
- So what does He do? He creates woman from the rib of Adam – to be a helper, an intimate companion of his
- Look at Adam’s reaction as God brings this gift of Eve to him...
 - o “Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.’” (Genesis 2:22-23)
- This may not seem like a very romantic or passionate response to us, but what Adam was in fact saying was something to the extent of... “WHOA... what a precious gift this is... a companion? Just for me? I am going to give her a name that is itself going to describe how much a part of me she will be... she is my very flesh!” You just can’t get any closer than being of ‘one flesh’
- This is what Scripture goes on to declare that ‘For this reason (what reason?) a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh’ (v.24)
- This idea of ‘one flesh’ is a very deep concept – it denotes being ‘one’ in everything possible there is to be united in – including physical; in the sexual act of consummation, man and woman literally come together and become ‘one flesh’... and this is tremendously sacred before God. God himself declares that this is to be!
- Scripture celebrates romance, celebrates pure sex... but always in the context and boundaries of marriage:
 - o Proverbs 5:18-19 → “May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth... may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.”

II) Your questions:

1. When’s an appropriate age to start dating?

- **Related question:** Most people become capable of reproducing by 17. The feasible and socially acceptable age to get married however is much higher. From Scripture, what are the minimum requirements to marriage that is acceptable to God? Compare this standard to the acceptable norm within CGC. Explain and elaborate on the differences.
- This is a very important question indeed – far too many people rush into relationships without being ready – and are often left in shambles spiritually, emotionally, when things don’t work out
- Song of Solomon 8:4 → “Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.”
- There is a time for love... the Bible warns us to not awaken it prematurely
- I think the answer to this really depends on what you think the purpose of dating is
- So what is the purpose of dating? Have you ever thought about that? I mean, really thought about it.
- There isn’t really an ‘appropriate age’ in Scripture, per se. What Scripture emphasizes, rather, is spiritual readiness and maturity.
- In Biblical times, a girl remained under the protection of her father until she married, at which point the responsibility to care and provide for the woman was transferred to her husband. A boy was

considered to become a ‘man’ at the age of 13 or 14 (at least in Israel, among God’s people) and this mark of manhood was celebrated with what’s known as a Bar Mitzvah.

- The whole concept of ‘casual dating’ (dating for the sake of dating) isn’t a Biblical concept at all, because the concept that people rightfully had of romance was that its goal was always a commitment to marriage; it didn’t always work out to marriage, but the point was before God, men and women (especially the man) was accountable for guarding their own, and each others’ hearts until they were able and willing to commit themselves to each other.
 - o Proverbs 4:23 → “Above all, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”
- So how do the precepts of Scripture apply to us today?
- ***Firstly, there really isn’t the concept of ‘dating’ in the Bible. God does not separate courtship from its rightful conclusion – marriage*** – at least not as we would define it in our age
 - o In the Bible, ‘courtship’ is always with the end goal of marriage – for this is the purpose that God caused attraction between man and woman in the first place
 - o Of course, courtship doesn’t always end up in marriage, but courtship (or ‘dating’ if you must call it that) was meant as an ‘appetizer’ to what is intended to be a full-course, scrumptious meal that you would call a feast
 - o Marriage is a mutual commitment between a man and woman in a relationship that is exclusive, and the closest bond that is possible between two human beings, before God (‘one flesh’, as God declares)
 - o So true Biblical dating or courtship is for a clearly stated purpose of finding out if God would want us to be married, not simply seeing how romantically involved we could become for the sake of a good time
 - o Perhaps the best example courtship is in the story of Isaac & Rebekah in Genesis 24
 - o The patriarch Abraham, a symbol of a life lived by faith, is in his last days on earth; He calls to his side his senior most servant... most Bible commentators believe he is Eliezer, who is mentioned earlier
 - o Abraham gives him what is perhaps his greatest mission to this point: “I would like you go back to the home of my fathers and find a young woman from among the people to be my son Isaac’s wife.”
 - o I won’t go into detail here, but if you read the account, you’ll notice a couple of things about Biblical courtship
 - **A godly community is involved:** Isaac was not the only one involved in the selection process, and I think that is pivotal. God was concerned. Abraham had prayed. Eliezer was sent...; there was, in fact, a community behind the scenes who were involved in this beautiful courtship...
 1. How often do we try to set ourselves up with partners on our own without looking to others in God’s family to help provide counsel and guidance?
 2. Biblical courtship involves godly wisdom from godly people
 - **Heavy-duty prayer is involved:** In the story, Abraham’s servant faithfully prays to God for guidance and wisdom in discerning who the intended bride may be.
 3. An important part of courtship is preparing yourself and asking God to lead the right person to you, or you to the right person
 - **Evidence of godliness is the focus in discernment:** When we read the account, we see that Abraham’s servant prays that God would show him the right woman by the

way she conducted herself... in this case generosity and mercy by extending a drink to both Eliezer and the animals he had with him

- **It is deliberate and planned:** Isaac and Rebekah do not rush head-in into their relationship... in fact, what you might imagine is that through the waiting period before Isaac encounters Rebekah they're both being told things about the other person the Scriptures that when they finally meet, "...she became his wife, and he loved her..." (Gen 24:67)

- ***Secondly, God desires that we be truthful and faithful in every relationship we engage in.***

- **Related question:** What is the Bible's view on dating around?
 - In light of how God calls us to live, if you're not "dating" with the intent of truly seeking the possibility of marriage, you shouldn't be dating at all
 - Come to your own conclusion, in light of all that we've seen in Scripture if 'dating for the sake of dating' is what God has intended, much less 'dating around' if you mean by that picking up a relationship here, dropping it a few months later and moving on to another, then dropping it etc.
 - Every time you relate to someone (especially of the opposite sex) there is an exchange going on
 - Every time you flirt, you're giving away a piece of your heart and your affection, and you're taking away the same from the other person
 - If God has set aside this gal or guy for someone specifically (which, if you believe in God's sovereignty, you will agree He has), what right do you have to take a part of their affection or heart away when it rightfully belongs to someone else?
 - On the other hand, if God hasn't intended for you to be with that person you're flirting with, what right do you have to give away what God has intended for the person who will become your husband or wife?
 - That is why, in a sense, courtship is a commitment – it's a promise not to play games with another's heart. It's serious; it's a willingness to honestly explore the merits of a lifelong commitment

- ***Thirdly, we are to reflect His holiness and His sacrificial love in all of our relationships***– that is, putting the other's welfare above our own

- Something to seriously think about: is how you feel about someone love? Or is it lust?
- There is an ENORMOUS difference
- True love is sacrificial; it is selfless, it is generous, it thinks the best of the other person, it thinks the best for the other person... it is exactly the kind of love that Christ showed for us by dying on the cross, though innocent He was, as a sacrifice and atonement for our sins
- Lust is just the opposite; it is selfish, it is calculating, it is manipulative, it puts your needs, your wants, your desires first; it uses others in their vulnerability; God declares lust a sin
 - Jesus says in Matthew 5:27-28 → "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

- Joshua Harris: "The basic answer to when it's the right time to start a courtship is when you can match romance with wisdom... The problems we see in relationships today – the impatience, the lack of purpose, and the misguided emotions – are all expressions of foolishness. We need wisdom. Wisdom complements romance."

- Like a string is to a kite, so is wisdom to romance... wisdom anchors romance, disciplines it and brings it to its highest potential

So are you ready to begin the season of courtship or dating?

- Harris asks three probing questions:
 - o Are you able to be patient?
 - Not wrong to desire marriage, but what is your greatest motive for starting a relationship? Are you characterized by peace or anxiousness?
 - o Can you set a clear course for the relationship?
 - Can't have a purposeful relationship or set a clear course for it when marriage is too far off. If you're not willing for a relationship to succeed and progress to engagement and marriage in a reasonable period of time, you probably shouldn't be dating
 - o Are your emotions based in reality?
 - First, do you have the right values about relationships? Make sure you know what God says about what matters in a partner and what makes a marriage healthy
 - Second, how's your perception? Do you accurately see your own situation and the person you're interested in? Have you sought counsel from others? Have you taken the time to learn more about the other person's character?
 - Don't follow your feelings until you've tested them
- Rather than asking what age you should start dating, challenge yourself by asking how are you preparing yourself to be the best husband / wife you can be?
- Bottom line is: if you don't feel that you're ready spiritually and maturity-wise to date, don't start dating

2. The Bible says not to be yoked with unbelievers, but what happens if the person I am dating is not a Christian but is willing to come to Church with me, and later becomes a Christian?

- **Related question:** If I am dating a non-believer, and realize that I have not been attending Church and fellowship often because of this relationship, should a break up be the wisest solution? But breaking up is just so hard to do...
- Let's be clear: God explicitly commands His people not to intermingle with those who are not His people; a few examples:
 - o **In the Old Testament:** When God was about to bring His people into the Promised Land, He gave stern warning to Israel on what they were to do and to not do; one of the things pertained directly to marriage:
 - Deuteronomy 7:1-4 → "When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you."
 - Look at the reason that God warns them not to intermarry... these pagan nations would lead the people astray

- This is how serious God is about preserving His holiness among His people... He goes on with this command: “This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.” (Deuteronomy 7:5-6)
- **In the New Testament:** The Apostle Paul explicitly commands Christians to not be ‘yoked with non-believers’ – in other words – to not come together or marry those who do have not submitted their lives to Christ:
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 → “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”
 - Look carefully at the language that Paul is using to describe the relationship between a Christian and his or her unbelieving spouse... there can be no greater polar opposite to darkness and light, to Christ and Satan!
 - This is just how far apart you are from someone who doesn't know Jesus Christ
 - You are walking in completely opposite directions

- Do you see the commonality between these passages? God is calling those who claim to be His people to ‘be separate’ from the rest of the world. They are set apart for God’s purpose and His own glory. To join yourself at the hip with someone who’s god is someone or something other than Christ is to dirty what God has intended and declared to be ‘clean’
- God warns us that to intermingle with non-Christians in such intimate relationships as courtship / dating or marriage is to invite trouble and temptation into our lives
- The issue is not really one of externals – it’s not about who you are or aren’t dating; who you date is merely an outward manifestation of the condition of your heart
- If you are a believer, stay away from dating non-Christians
- As I said earlier, God’s design for courtship is for the intent of truly seeking the possibility of marriage
- So here’s the question – if someone you meet isn’t a Christian, by what we’ve said they aren’t ‘marriage material’ for you in God’s eyes - so what business do you have going out or dating them?

Is it a sacrifice?

- On one hand, it certainly is. Often you may meet someone who’s got great personality, is physically attractive, claims to high moral standards... and just generally seems to be a ‘great guy’ or gal
- The temptation certainly is to say to yourself, “wow... I certainly am attracted to this person... what’s the big deal if I ask them out for an innocent movie date?” or “can’t we just hang out? It’s not like I’m proposing or anything...”
- We’ll deal with the ‘no big deal’ issue in a second

- For now, may I encourage you the next time you're tempted to think this way to go back to the account of the Rich Young Man in the book of Mark or Matthew and look for yourself what exactly it is that the Lord Jesus demands of you, if you would claim to follow Him?
 - o Mark 10:17-23 → "As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "**Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.**" At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"
- Christ **demand complete loyalty to Himself**, especially in where we place our affections
- Would it have been a great sacrifice for this man to sell everything he had (remember, he was rich) so that he could whole-heartedly follow Jesus? Certainly.
- But it was a greater sacrifice he made by choosing to keep his earthly treasures and reject Christ, because he was giving up something that was far more precious and valuable (not to say, eternal!) for things that moth and rust would destroy.

Final exhortation to those who are in a relationship with a non-Christian:

- Break up with him or her. There is no better advice I can give to you, because it is God's counsel to you
- Is it hard? Most certainly. Will you suffer pain and sorrow? Of course you will. But the emptiness you'll feel is only for a short while and if you're willing to submit this fully to the Lord you'll find mysteriously that this emptiness will blossom into a fullness that is far greater than you can ever imagine, because the emptiness will be filled by God and His very own promise that He has reserved the very best for you
 - o Jeremiah 29:11-13 → "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

3. How do I know if a certain person is right for me? Often, people say, you never know if that person is right for marriage until you date them for a while. Is it right to get into a relationship, test it, and decide if that person is right?

- Let's say you're now mature enough to begin considering pursuing a committed relationship – i.e. you're ready for Biblical courtship!
- But how do you know if a certain person is right for you?
- How would you know whether someone is 'marriage material' if you've not yet gone out with them?
- Let's get this straight – I don't think God forbids us from dating to truly assess whether someone is who He has intended for us... and the fact is that is if you don't get to know that person you'll never been in a position of wisdom to know what God would have you do
- But I think here's the time to draw a clear line in the sand – get legalistic with yourself when it comes to figuring out what **God's** 'checklist' is for you, rather than your own checklist
- You'll know if someone you're interested in is God's intention for you if you've been focusing on preparing yourself to be God's best for another

- A general principle in relationships: like attracts like → if you are seeking holiness and godliness, you will attract holiness and godliness
- Let's start with Scripture has to say regarding the things to look for in a boyfriend or girlfriend that will hopefully lead to a committed relationship in marriage; gives some very clear guidelines in what the 'very best' is that God would have for us
- In women (men, take note!):
 - Proverbs 31:10-31 → "A wife of **noble character** who can find? She is **worth far more than rubies**. Her husband has **full confidence in her** and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, her food from afar. **She gets up while it is still dark**; she provides food for her family portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. **She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy**. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. **Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land**. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. **She speaks with wisdom, faithful instruction is on her tongue**. She watches over the affairs of her household does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." **Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised**. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."
 - There are many books and studies on this passage, so I just want to highlight a few nuggets of precious truth that God shows us about what a woman who pleases Him looks like
 1. She will be a woman of **noble** character → nobility means having high moral standards, someone who will not compromise; because of her nobility, the Bible says that she is of tremendous worth – more than even rubies
 2. She will be a woman who is **trustworthy** → not just in the daily necessities, but it says here trustworthy do what is the very best for her husband and family
 3. She will be a woman who is **hard working**, 'getting up while it is still dark' so that she can provide for those around her → this is a picture of servanthood – a woman who pleases the Lord is someone who is selfless
 4. She will be a woman who is **generous and merciful** → 'she opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to those who are needy...'
 5. Note something interesting here... this passage speaks of the **kind of man this woman will attract!** A husband who is well-respected and willing to lead as God calls him to
 6. She will be a woman who is **wise and faithful** → in other words, she will be a person of her word
 - The greatest thing about this woman will be that **she fears the Lord** and sets her focus on pleasing Him, instead of on the outward appearances → 'charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting...'

- 1 Peter 3:3-4 says something very similar → “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”
- Women, here’s what to look for in a man:
 - Ephesians 5:25-28 → “Husbands, **love your wives**, just as Christ loved the church and **gave himself up for her to make her holy**, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, **husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies**. He who loves his wife loves himself.”
 - What this passage highlights:
 1. The man will demonstrate **love** → true, sacrificial love that we talked about earlier; this is a giving, selfless love
 2. Does the man seek to care and pray for those around him? What is he like among crowds? Does he place the needs of others above his own? Or does he always go for the ‘biggest drumstick’ when you’re eating at Hong Fatt?
 - 2 Timothy 2:14-15 → “Keep reminding them (reliable men mentioned in verse 2) of these things. Warn them before God **against quarreling about words**; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and **who correctly handles the word of truth**”
 - What this passage highlights:
 1. The man that God delights in will be someone who isn’t prone to quarreling nor demonstrating his ‘strength’ by throwing his weight around
 2. Rather, the man will focus on building up those around him, and have utmost respect for the authority and God’s Word over every area of his life
 - Ask Rebekah Hwang, and you’ll get three things to look for in a man: 1) Does he love God? 2) Does he work hard? And 3) Does he love me?

Is meeting someone in church really the only “safe” way of meeting a partner? e.g. what if I meet someone, how far along until I ask if they’re Christian or not? Is it “bad” to meet people in “grey area” locations like clubs?

- The question isn’t whether this is ‘bad’ or not
- The question is if you’re really honest, what kind of person are you likely to meet at a club or a bar? Do true Bible-believing Christians go clubbing? Perhaps. Do folks who’re really sold out for Christ tend to hang out in places that often seem more like a meat market? Maybe
- My place isn’t to judge – but it’s really important to ask yourself these serious questions
- Scripture says “Bad company corrupts good character...” – 1 Cor 15:33

4. What is appropriate physical contact during dating / courtship? What is considered going ‘too far’? Specifically, is it OK to ‘French kiss’ while dating?

- This is probably one of the most important questions you should be wrestling with if you claim to follow Christ: it is the issue of sexual purity
- I cannot stress enough how much God stresses on the importance of striving for purity in your relationships

- The relationship that God has designed between man and woman is a tremendously sacred thing; in our day, we've cheapened and dulled this relationship and really taken it out of its intended place in God's plan
- Remember what we said earlier: the attraction between a man and woman is God-given
- But God clearly places marriage as the boundaries within which we are to enjoy the fruits of physical (sexual) attraction
- While we're given the ability to have strong physical desires for someone, we aren't free to exercise this ability before marriage
- The Bible speaks of physical expression of love as being reserved for 'the marriage bed', and its purity kept
 - o Hebrews 13:4 → "Marriage should be honored by all, and the **marriage bed kept pure**, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral"

Scripture warns us severely against sins of the flesh

- Scripture warns us in many, many places about the dangers of sexual sin
- Some are to warn that those who habitually sit and do not make efforts to get rid of it need to question their very salvation
 - o Galatians 5:19-25 → "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that **those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**
- God also warns those of us who may be true believers against falling into the destructive temptations of sexual sin
 - o 1 Corinthians 6: 18-20 → "**Flee from sexual immorality.** All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."
 - o 1 Corinthians 6: 13 → "...The body is **not meant for sexual immorality**, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."
 - o 2 Timothy 3:22 → "**Flee the evil desires of youth**, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Instead, this is what God requires of us...

- We are to "**pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace**"... that come from a pure heart (previous passage in 2 Tim 3)
- We are to not live by the standards of the world, but rather, to '**...take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.**' (2 Corinthians 10:5)
- 1 Timothy 5:1-2 → "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and **younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.**"
- I'm not trying to be legalistic, but I'm trying to present to you Biblical principles that will help guide your decisions on what can often be very confusing times of dating and courtship
- For some people, a peck on the cheek or a frontal hug is enough to send their thoughts wandering down the territory of sin
- For others, it may be sitting alone together on a couch in front of the TV that gives them a false sense of entitlement and just enough privacy and intimacy to result in sin

- Instead of indulging in the physical, a God-glorifying, wisdom-guided courtship will have two central priorities:
 - o To treat each other with holiness and sincerity
 - o To make an informed and wise decision about marriage
- In courtship, our goals should be to **grow and guard**
 - o We want to grow closer so we can truly know each other's character, but we also want to guard each other's hearts because the outcome of our relationships is still unknown."
 - o 2 Corinthians 1:12 → "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, **and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God.** We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace."
- What does God really desire of us? Not that we 'push the envelope' and see how far we can go without 'crossing the line', but that we strive for His holiness, His love, His truthfulness and His faithfulness

What if you're having problems controlling feelings? Meaning your in a situation where your "emotions" (hormones?) are taking over. Or the other person is pushing you to go further?

- If the other person is pushing you to go further – I really have only one word for you, and it's from the Bible... FLEE (Joseph and Potiphar's wife – Genesis 39)
- Read example of Josh Harris and Shannon (page 141-143)
- Has this ever happened to you? You're in a situation that you just know is compromising. Maybe you even found yourself manipulating the situation just a little so that you could end up alone with a girl, or a guy... and indulge in thoughts and actions that you knew in the bottom of your heart were ugly, sinful... things that you'd never do if someone you respected were around, much less if Jesus Himself were around!
- Remember, if we live by the principles of the world, we will always fall short of God's standard or purity; the world says "if it feels good, why not do it?"
- The world tells us that it's 'not a big deal'
- "The longer your 'no big deal' list is before marriage, the shorter your 'very special' list will be after marriage" – Joshua Harris

Questions to ask oneself:

1. Am I prepared to lead my wife spiritually and serve her in every way?
2. Do I have proven character, and am I growing in godliness?
3. To whom and for what am I accountable?
4. How am I involved in the church? What are my gifts and ministry areas? What are hers?
5. Are my motives for pursuing marriage (or courtship) selfish and worldly, or are they to honor God?
6. Can I provide financially?
7. What do my pastors and parents have to say?