

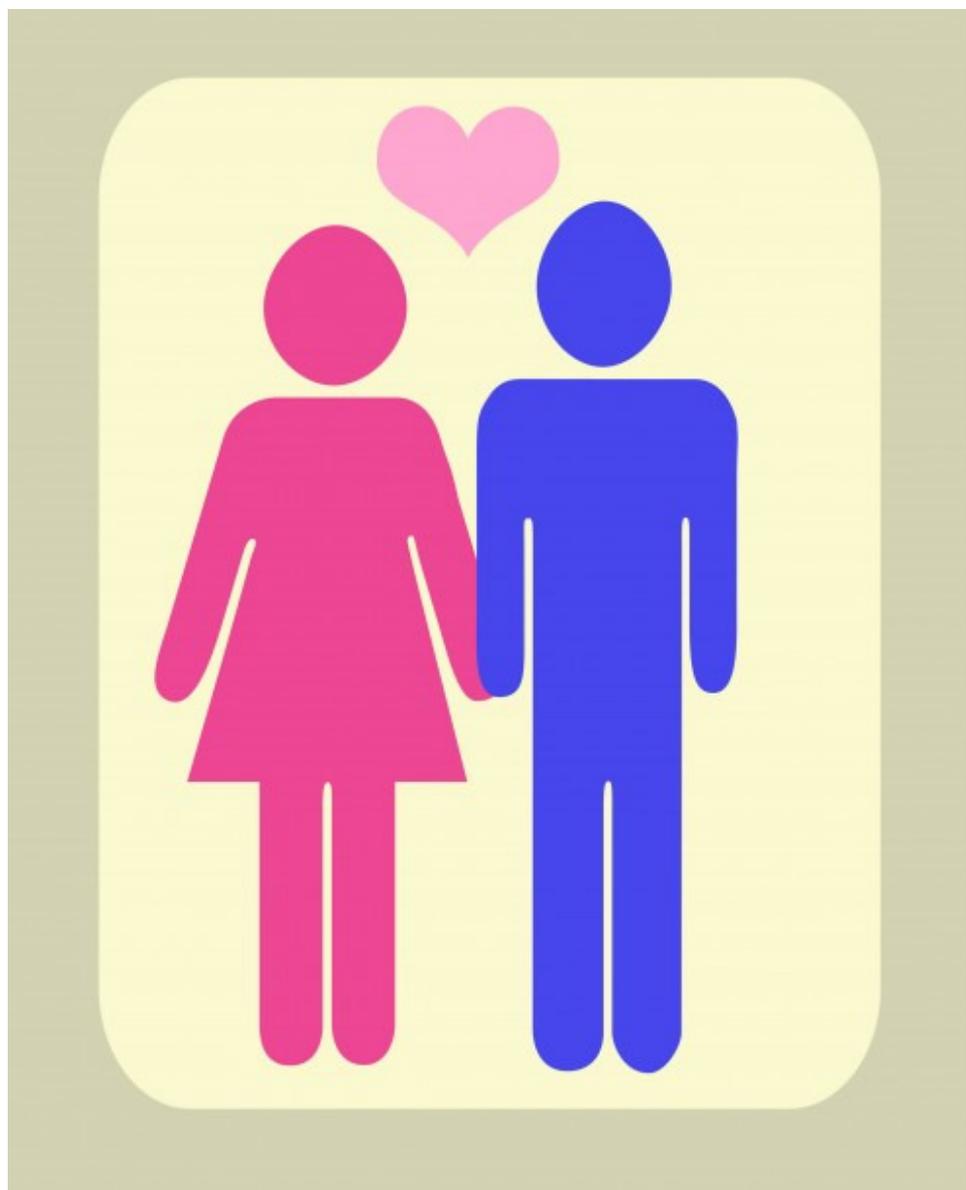


Dating an  
introvert  
just  
like Me.  
OR maybe  
someone  
like Me.



[www.leelaramandicks.com](http://www.leelaramandicks.com)

*Dating*  
&  
*Marriage*  
*Pastor James Travis*



# *Contents*

Preface.....	5
Dating.....	6
Devotions .....	7
The Single Life—Is it Okay to Remain Single.....	23
Living Together Before Marriage .....	24
I Messed Up Now What.....	28
Marriage.....	32
Marriage: What’s the Big Deal.....	35

# Preface

## Biblical Points about Marriage

1. Marriage between one man and one woman is designed, ordained, and blessed by God for the purpose of relieving human loneliness, filling the earth and subduing it (*Genesis 1, 2:21-25*).
2. Marriage and dating are not required in the Bible. Jesus never married and Paul recommended if a person was able to do so (*1 Corinthians 7:8-9*), to do so for the Lord Himself. A person need not feel obligated to date, court, or even marry.
3. Marriage is intended for life. Marriage is to be ended only by death. Likewise divorce is contrary to God's will because it goes against God's plan to end human loneliness and isolation. Every divorce is therefore a cause for repentance and forgiveness in Jesus Christ (*Matthew 19:3-12*).
4. Marriage is a life-long binding covenant before God and society (*Malachi 2:14*).
5. Marriage is the only proper and safest place for sexual intimacy as designed by God (*1 Corinthians 7:23, Hebrews 13:4*). As a result, sex outside of or before marriage is sin and even giving the appearance of such activity dishonors the marriage bed. Yet, like all sins, as one repents (being sorry and changing one's ways) and comes again to Christ, they are forgiven and enabled to change by the power of the Holy Spirit (*1 John 1*)\*.
6. Marriage is a reflection of the relationship between Jesus and His Church (*Ephesians 5:21-33, Revelation 21, 22*).



# Devotions for Dating

## Genesis 2:23-24

*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. 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (NIV)*

One of the goals of dating/courting is to find someone to spend the rest of our lives with, someone to be married to, and who is "Mr. or Mrs. Right." After all, divorce is huge in society. It hurts and causes many problems in the lives of family. I want to be "one flesh" with only one person and get it right the first time.

These are legitimate thoughts held by young adults presently dating. God after all did design marriage to last a life time. Marriage, after all, is changing from "I" to "We" and from "Two" to "One." When the "We" and "One" is broken it really hurts and leaves a lifetime scar that though forgivable does not go away.

The goal of this devotion book is to give straightforward biblical stuff about marriage and dating that will help make your date life fun, safe, and joyful. The ultimate goal of dating or courtship as we shall see is to find "Mr. Right" or "Mrs. Right."

Keep in mind if you are not interested in marriage or dating there is nothing wrong with you. While Jesus was on earth, he did not date. It also seems his disciples did not date or court (Peter was married). They instead devoted themselves to the Lord. Those inclined towards the single life might focus on the devotion on page 23.

# Marriage is a Covenant

*What God does in marriage:*

**Malachi 2:13-15** *Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. "Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. (NIV)*

Before we go into dating itself, I think it is helpful to understand what marriage is anyway. Marriage in Bible times was started in a different way than we begin marriage today. One thing hasn't changed, then like today marriage is a life long covenant between two people. At least that is what we still say at weddings!

What is a covenant? A covenant was basically the Biblical way of making a deal. Today, two people shake hands, sign a paper, and the deal is made. In Biblical days, it was a little more hands on. Say you wanted to make a covenant with another person. For example, in exchange for his property and you are willing to work for 20 years. What you would do to make such a covenant would be to take an animal such as a sheep and cut it in half. The word covenant literally means "to cut." Hence, we say today, "Let's cut a deal." After the animal was cut in half both parties would walk between the two animals. This act was a way of saying, "If you go back on the deal I will cut you in half just like we cut the animal in half. The other person had the right to do the same. So making a covenant was a big deal.

Marriage was thought of also as a covenant between two people. After all, God, the inventor of marriage and sex,

knew how much it would hurt for a marriage to be broken. When marriages are broken, literally two people feel broken. Even the most gracious divorcees cut each other in half.

The verse for today shows how much God wants us to find someone we can be faithful with for life long.

**Prayer:** Lord, I do not want to be cut in half by the pain of broken relationships. Lord, you want marriage to be based on serious commitment that only you can ultimately provide or break. Help me to be faithful, forgive me when I have not been true to my Word. Help me to find someone equally committed to you and to marriage according to your will and your time. In Jesus name. Amen

# The Marriage Ceremony in The Old Testament

## **Genesis 24:63-64**

*Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

Talk about a small wedding. Marriage was done far different in the Old Testament than we experience today. Both were committed to life long marriage, but it was not done in a church or at the court house, but in the bedroom. Marriage began in the Old Testament with the act of sexual intercourse. So, in effect to think of marriage in the Old Testament way means: 1. Marriage is Blessed in the Church. 2. The covenant is made with a marriage license (court house). 3. But the real marriage happens after the ceremony, after the witnesses on the honey moon or in some cases on the way to the honey moon.

This should make us think a bit about sexual intercourse and its place in dating. Do we really want to get married in God's eyes ahead of marriage? It is no wonder that a person can feel so devastated after breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend. It is bad enough if you have been together for a year, but if you have had sex together you know the person inside and out. In a sense the two are married in God's eyes, they have been one in flesh. This is why Christians wait till marriage for sex!

Life long they will know each other deeply, they have known and felt the deepest emotions God designed for two people to have and now for this to be broken they are divorced.

What an awful feeling that just does not go away. There is only one solution to this problem. Blood has to be shed. Nice words, "It will be okay." just do not cut it. No real forgiveness, real cleansing from something stronger than wa-

ter. This is why Jesus came to die on the cross. This is why Jesus came pour out his body and blood in the Lord's Supper to touch us in a way deeper than sex that takes all our mistakes away.

Jesus was in a conversation with a woman who had been married five times and she was living with the one that she was presently with:

**John 4:15-20, 39-41** *"The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."*

*He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."*

*"I have no husband," she replied.*

*Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."*

*"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."*

*.Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.*

Jesus came as her Savior just as well as all the other people there. It is comforting to know, he would have even those who have made mistakes.

**Prayer:** Lord not every relationship was like Isaac and Rebekah. Many have lived just like this Samaritan women. Forgive me when I have lived in brokenness in thought, word, or deed. Help me to live for you in Jesus. Amen

# Finding the Right One

I suppose there are many dating techniques in the world, but my favorite is the story of Isaac and Rebekah. These two did not even date. The key to their marriages success was that *both* were committed to the marriage. Both believed in God and both would work through everything together. I pray you enjoy reading this story of dating:

## **Genesis 24:1-4, 12-21**

*Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. 2 He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. 3 I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, 4 but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."*

*Then he prayed, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. 14 May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'--let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."*

*Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. 16 The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.*

*The servant hurried to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar."*

*"Drink, my lord," she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.*

*After she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking." 20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. 21 Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.*

To make a long story short (Genesis 24) Rebekah did go back with the servant and she was immediately married to Isaac. The key to this marriage is not that they knew everything about the other person, but instead that they were committed to the marriage. In a sense any marriage can work with God's help if both are committed to it.

**Lessons:**

1. Pray for your future spouse.
2. Commit to being Committed
3. Ask the Lord to Direct You to the Right Person

**Prayer:** Lord God, provide for me too! You are the God of miracles. Prepare me, prepare my future spouse, if it be your will, for a marriage that will last a life time. In Jesus name. Amen

# Why date?

## II Corinthians 6:14

*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (NIV)*

In yesterdays devotion you could make an argument that we should just go to a mail order service, pray and then marry whoever is sent. Why date?

In fact, my great grand father did this. He lived in the Dakotas. He was busy working, but knew he should get married. He asked that the people back home send someone from Detroit for marriage. They did and my great grandparents managed to stay married life long. Wow! Are you kidding!? It happened!

What about dating? Is there any biblical reason to do it? It obviously is not required for marriage. The answer comes in that even biblically we are to know the person we are marrying. The Bible says that a Christian should not marry a non-Christian. How are you going to find out if the person is a Christian? The way we do it today is on a "date?"

You see one of the greatest burdens for a Christian would be to live with a non-Christian. It is like a donkey being yoked with a oxen. The donkey will never pull its share and the cart will go in circles. It is better for both to be Christians and for the cart to be pulled straight forward.

What is my advise? If after asking if the person believes in Jesus and practices their faith in church they say no, then this is grounds enough to stop dating. You can be friends, you can share Jesus with them, but don't "date" a non-Christian, it could lead to great trouble. The other reason for dating is to get to know their personality. Learn if you can stand being around their good and bad habits. If nothing else you may gain a friend: Find out about other areas of their life. Ask what they believe about family,

about friends, find out how they treat other people? The idea is to find out if they truly practice their Christianity. Imagine marrying and find out if someone just claimed to be a Christian and then beat his wife, verbally swore around them and even used drugs. Be wary, many will claim to believe just to get love. Take some biblical advice from Jesus, "Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars." Luke 6:44 Dating is meant to get past this.

**Prayer:** Provide me with believing friends, acquaintances, help me to recognize faith in those whom I date. Be with those who don't know you and raise the dead to life forever with you. In Jesus name. Amen

## How much do you need to know about a person before getting married?

### Genesis 4:1

*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. (KJV*

The Bible talks a lot about "knowing." God wants to know us. He wants us to know him. It also talks about "knowing" one special person of the opposite sex. What does the Bible mean by "knowing?" There are different levels of knowing. **Level 1:** We "know" what someone looks like by facial recognition. Movie stars and the characters they play, we know their physical appearance. **Level 2:** We know our acquaintances by their personality. We know them enough to work with them in school or at a job. Some acquaintances we do not like. **Level 3:** We know our friends in a deeper way. We know their tastes, their dislikes, we spend time with them. We know how to talk with them about the good and the bad. They connect with us. **Level 4:** Two people know one another in marriage. Two people who are married know each other best as acquaintances, as friends, as

companions, and lastly, they know each other intimately and sexually. Hence, the greatest intimacy is much more than sex. Intimacy is all four levels together!

In dating it is best to work to get to start with level 1 and move through 2 & 3 to the point of close friendship and to stay away from knowing in such a way that produces kids. Going through the mechanical actions of sex actually does not get to know a person at all, other than they have a sex drive. Sex is designed for the commitment and protection of marriage which protects such intimacy and the family God may bless out of it. A good rule to live by is to do things that would help you become friends. Your date should be able to interact with your friends. It is always a bad sign if two people become so consumed that they lose all their existing friends.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me to find the one you want me to know. Before I am married help me to get to know many people as acquaintances and friends. If it is your will help me to find some one to especially know for life long. Forgive me when my thoughts, words and deeds have strayed and gotten this knowing out of order. Amen

## Kissing and Caressing

### **Genesis 34: 1-4, 13-17, 25**

*Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife." When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he kept quiet about it until they came home. ... Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of*

*Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife." When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he kept quiet about it until they came home. ... Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male.*

When it comes to kissing and caressing, I remember as a teenager that many of my teachers would send couples to the detention for public displays of affection. I'll admit some would go pretty far even in my day. Hand on butt, tongue lodged in back of throat, tonsil to tonsil, etc. etc. Or people would do what was called "petting" where the other would rub the other persons private parts as a sign of their love.

God designed us to feel strongly about a person of the opposite sex and there is a natural drive in us to express this to someone. The question is; should we control these desires or should we let our feelings fully hang out?

If asked, "Why do you do it?" Many will say, "We are in love!" But my question is: "Are you really in love or are you just infatuated with each other?" Infatuation is really just the tingling feeling that comes when the other person is around. You feel on cloud nine. Your heart beats faster, you are aroused, little touches just make you feel all the closer to the other person. Infatuation, like a drug requires higher doses day by day. The simple little kiss on the cheek needs to become a two minute kiss, and so on.

Be careful of the drug of infatuation, it is not necessarily true love. True love is deeper. Consider being married to this person except after a tragic car accident she/he lost both arms and both legs. Her/His face marred up, her/his appearance like meat loaf. Would you continue being with her/him night and day, because she/he could no longer ful-

fill the infatuation? True love is deep. It does not require affection at every moment. Although as we will see within marriage love making is far better than any sexual contact outside marriage.

To get back to the question, what about kissing, caressing, putting an arm over the shoulder? A good way to answer this question is with another question: "Am I glorifying God by this \_\_\_\_\_?" If the answer is yes, then go ahead. If the answer is no then stop. For example after a year of dating a couple might kiss as an expression of trust. Likewise holding hands could be very good as they continue to grow their friendship. Whereas a kiss done purely out of infatuation may not be glorifying God or the other person.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I know I am called to be infatuated with you and your love. Yet, teach me the difference between infatuation and true love especially between man and a woman. Lord, provide me wisdom in dating that would reserve infatuation for marriage of a believing spouse. Amen

## When am I Going to Far?

### 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 immorality. (NIV)*

A couple made a promise to one another that they would not have sex before marriage. They wanted to be pleasing to God with their bodies. Yet, like a typical couple they were a bit infatuated with one another. After all, they were rightly excited with one another as they continued to build their friendship. One day they decided that they would enjoy a movie together and spend time kissing afterward. They would not go any further than this. It sounded like a good plan and they proceeded to go through with this.

It produced some neat sensations and they admired one another's bodies and they remained true to their promise. They did the same thing the next week, alone together, they began to kiss neck and neck. The arousal was very strong and both of them consumed with each other proceeded to go much farther than they had ever imagined.

There is an old expression that says "Don't play with fire otherwise you will get burned." This couple thought they could control their passions, yet as they pushed the limits they could not control themselves. A word from the wise, the longer the kisses, the greater the body contact, the greater chance of getting burned.

I have often heard people say, "It was an accident" that we had sex. Yet, this is the furthest from the truth. It was not an accident. If you put yourself in the metaphorical marriage bed, what happens there will happen. They put themselves alone, in a setting where the conditions were very right. It is no accident.

What do you do in such a situation? If you find your body running the show rather than your mind, then take a shower or go away by yourself. Don't place yourself in temptations way. If by yourself you sin, repent to God, this is much better than dishonoring the marriage bed and being left with tremendous guilt, and a commitment of marriage that can not be taken back.

If you find yourselves constantly in such great temptations it is better to make adjustments i.e. to promise to be clothed and not spend long times alone together, showing body parts. This is just playing with fire. You might not burn yourself the first time, but eventually I can almost guarantee it you will get burned. Keep the marriage bed pure.

**Prayer:** Lord your servant John said, "If we say we have not sinned we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Lord I do fail in thought word, and deed. Forgive me for Jesus sake and help me by the power of the Holy Spirit to

change my life to be pleasing to you. Lord provide people around me, fellow Christians to help hold me accountable and to keep the marriage bed pure. In Jesus name. Amen.

## What about Oral Sex

### I Corinthians 7:1-4

*Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."<sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.<sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.<sup>4</sup> For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*

With the scandal of Bill Clinton and his famous words, "I did not have sex with that woman." came the idea that oral (mouth) sex is really not sex because it is impossible to get a woman pregnant. It is a way to satisfy ones sexual urges and be free from the consequences of pregnancy. The same logic has also made homosexuality permissible in our society. After all, all we are doing is stimulating our sexual organs so that sexual energy is released.

This argument turns people into pleasure machines who live and breath for excitement. Whatever you want to do, do it, it does not matter. In fact, all sorts of games have been devised with this thinking in mind. Parties are made where multiple girls perform oral sex on multiple guys seeing who can hold out the longest.

Yet, all of this devalues why God invented sex in the first place. Such games completely miss the point of dating and marriage. Sex whether oral or intercourse belongs within marriage. Using a condom does not make it less wrong. God invented sex for married people, for companionship, for a physical expression of love, and the benefit of having

children.

Marriage, I will admit allows these desires to be curbed. In fact, Paul says everyone should get married with such desires, *"But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife."* (1 Corinthians 7: 1-4) In fact, it is good for husbands and wives to have sex often to curb being tempted to run off with another man or woman, but marriage is so much more, companionship, someone to talk to, someone who can forgive your sins. Sex in marriage again is so much better, because you know the other person will be around. There is commitment.

**Prayer:** Lord society comes up with some strange ways to justify sex outside of marriage. Help me and society to see marriage as you ordained it. Forgive, renew and change me and society to reflect what you would have for us. Be with those I may date in the future and also with my future spouse according to your will. In Jesus name. Amen

## How Long Should Someone Date/ Court?

### **Proverbs 19:13**

*A foolish son is his father's ruin, and a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping.*

I have known people who have dated one week and then married and stayed together all their life. I have also known people who have dated for ten years, married and stayed together life long. The key to either situation is commitment. If there is no commitment then neither person should at-

tempt marriage. It will surely fail. If the marriage is merely for sex it will most surely fail because sex can be found with other people. If the marriage is merely happening to raise a child, as soon as the child moves out the marriage will end. Marriage is commitment built on God joining two people as one.

I personally would argue that it is okay to date multiple people. In fact, the more people you get to know the more you will learn about people. You will learn new ways to think about the world. You can learn from anyone something. You may learn, this person is not for me!

Another fallacy is the thought, "If I date them and get married I can make them a Christian." This almost never happens. Or the thought, "If I keep dating them I can change them to be more like the person I want them to be." Unfortunately, you can not change a person in marriage. In fact, often during dating a person will change what they are like to please the other person. For example, while dating Bill cleaned up his room to please Suzy. But after they got married, Bill's room was always messy. Suzy complained to know end. Yet, if Suzy had asked Bill's friends and really gotten to know him she would have found out that he was messy all along.

There is an old true saying, "You get what you get."

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me not to be a future dripping spouse. Help when I date to be who I am with the other person and not pretend to be someone else. In Jesus name. Amen

# The Single Life -

## Do I have to get Married?

You do not have to get married! Jesus was single and so was St. Paul. It is not evil to remain unmarried. However, the scriptures say it is better to get married than to let your passions burn. In fact, if this is not a struggle for you the scriptures say that a person can be even more effective as a Christian remaining single. Listen to what Paul says:

*I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife--and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord."*

*If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin--this man also does the right thing. So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better. (1 Corinthians 7:32-38) (NIV)*

**Prayer:** Lord thank-you for your words about marriage and the single life. Help me apply them fully to my life and not ignore or twist them. In Jesus name. Amen

# Living Together Before Marriage

## 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. (NIV)*

In society today it has become almost a step in dating to move in together to "try out marriage." After all, we want to make sure we are compatible with one another so that we will not divorce.

The logic behind this move is good, but the results are not. I will admit, God does not want divorce and so it makes sense to do what ever it takes to prevent divorce...

There are two major problems with living together however. First of all, living together almost always puts two people in a situation that almost always leads to pre-marital sex. As was written earlier, this is not just sinful when two are living together but equally sinful with those who live apart. The living arrangement simply permits "playing with fire" in a closer environment.

The second problem is that living together actually does not accurately give a good picture of marriage. Two people may learn each others quirks, i.e. the guy leaves the toilet seat up and the young women spends three hours putting on make-up, but beyond these basic habits it really teaches nothing about marriage.

Why? The reason is simple, in a living together situation there is always the opportunity to leave. If there are problems, either party can move out. Both people can basically do what ever they please. Yet, when two people become married all of this changes. There is "no way out." Two "I's" become one "We." A miracle happens that cannot be tested by living together. Plus, often couples are nicer while "living together!" After all, they are "dating."

The result is that people who live together before marriage typically get divorced. You would think the opposite would be true. Living together is a cheap substitute for commitment and covenant. Consider why someone chooses to live together with someone rather than getting married. The reason is they are unsure. If they are unsure about commitment, they should definitely not get married. It is no wonder that marriages after living together are often very weak.

**Prayer:** Lord it seems so right to test marriage ahead of time by living together. Help the world to see this wisdom is flawed and just an excuse to live follow the devil and His desire for our relationships to be painful and broken. Give me patience and strength each day. In Jesus name. Amen

**Statistics and Stuff:** (Check out the study: *American Sociological Review*, 1988, Vol 53: 127-138 entitled, "Commitment and the Modern Union: Assessing the Link Between Premarital Cohabitation and Subsequent Marital Stability." The conclusion made divorce after living together is 80% higher than the risk of divorce after not living together, which is already too high.") See also: [www.marriagebuilders.com](http://www.marriagebuilders.com) 57% of cohabiting couples dissolve within **ten years** when compared with 30% of all first marriages (VanGoethem 2005:77). That is almost double the rate of marriage.

## Praying About Your Future Spouse

### Proverbs 19:14

*Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.*

Pray that God would help you find a spouse who will be a blessing in your life. Pray that you can grow old together and that you can serve one another. Likewise, pray that you can serve God and your neighbor together. Do not forget to

pray for the person whom you are dating. Realize you might not be the one. Maybe God has someone else for them. In so doing, you are praying for God's will.

I remember I began praying for my future spouse when I was in middle school. I wanted God to give me someone who was Lutheran, who loved music, and that I could serve. God took many years to answer my prayer and He had much to teach me about what it meant to get marriage, but he answered my prayer completely when I met my wife.

Trying to date and determine this by oneself will work, but if you want to really be blessed ask for God's help.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you know the past, present, and future. You designed us to be single like your Son Jesus, like the first Adam. You also cared for us when we were alone and provided marriage. Some can not live the single life because of immorality in the world. Lord, be with my future spouse. Grow her/him in God's Word. Build her up in the activity of Your bride the church. Help her to be active in her faith. Likewise, help me to be a servant, to learn what it means to sacrifice myself for (her/him). Teach me to be prudent. Forgive me when I fail. Amen

## High Standards for a Wife

For this devotion enjoy the characteristics of a noble wife. If you are female then seek to emulate her. If you are male then look for such characteristics in those around you. Set your standards high. Date, be patient and seek the Lord first. Ask for forgiveness and for the Holy Spirit's help.

### **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,*

*all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and 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, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and 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. (NIV)*

**Prayer:** Thank-for these words of Wisdom. They are beyond grasp for myself and those around me. They are everyday and not pie in the sky. Help me to care about taking care of those around me and having such high respect for others. Help me to be and be in relationships with people that are noble. Thank-you for doing these very things for me through Jesus Christ. Amen





# I Messed Up Now What?

## John 8:3-11

*The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (NIV)*

The key to this story is Jesus' words at the end, "Then neither do I condemn you ... Go now and leave your life of sin." There is forgiveness, and now in repentance she is to leave her life of sin. In your dating, even if you have gone too far in the past, accept Jesus' all covering forgiveness and with the power of the Holy Spirit, have his help as you continue to date. God is the God of second chances. Guard yourself with God's Word otherwise you will easily fall again.

**Prayer:** Overlook my sin, O Lord, help me to go and leave my life of sin. Send people who like Jesus will me call me on the carpet for my sin and set me free. Amen

# The Best Sex

## I Corinthians 7:3-4

*The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.*

The Bible makes it very clear that the best sexual experiences occur in marriage. Read Song of Solomon for just such examples. Jewish writers have urged people to wait till they are 35 and married to read this book.

Studies that are still conducted today verify this truth. If a couple abstains from sex before marriage, they are 29 to 47% more likely to enjoy sex afterward than those who cohabit. Sexual satisfaction rises considerably more after marriage (Hering 1994:4). More women cohabit than men, but men are more likely to cohabit serially (Bumpass & Sweet 1989; Teachman & Polanko 1990).

In fact, before marriage sex is often cumbersome and scary. Often teens can get very hurt even physically because the act itself is more about pleasure than true love and commitment. Plus there are no worries of sexually transmitted diseases, no worries about a child not being having a solid home. Statistic after statistic show that married woman have a much higher standard of living that those who have engaged in sexual activity before marriage.

Again even with these things said, guilt can plague. Bring it to Jesus who alone forgives. Turn back to him and date looking forward to marriage.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you have said sex is good in marriage. Help me to wait. Give me strength and peace. In Jesus name. Amen

### **Joy in Dating/Courting**

This book included many rules of the Bible. You could ask, "Does God want to spoil all of our fun?" This is the furthest from the truth. God wants us to be happy. In fact in dating the door is wide open for fun, games, conversation that is healthy and will leave us feeling good. Food, fellowship, time with other couples and singles give us many opportunities. Worship with your date. Get to know their church. You will have much more fun in life with someone who believes the same way as you do! Don't settle for someone who does not know Jesus or does not follow him! Have high standards! Go to Bible Study together! Have fun!

**Pastor James Travis**

# Wedding Plans

Have you found a person you feel God wants you to spend the rest of your life! Congratulations. God loves marriage! Contact your pastor and set up a time to talk about getting married. Come even if you have made mistakes. Come not just to plan a wedding, but to help receive further council in preparing for marriage. Most pastors have 6-8 session programs to help prepare for marriage.

## Marriage License

***The marriage license must be in the hands of the pastor no later than the day prior to the wedding.***

The pastor will need the signature of the Bride, Groom and the two witnesses before the ceremony is completely finalized. The certificate can be purchased at the county Courthouse Clerk's Office. It cost \$20 and you need to bring 2 forms of ID and someone who knows you! It is wise to go in a week early! After it is recorded, the county clerk will return a photocopy to the married couple. This can be done ahead of the church wedding or during if the couple wants to wait to be together (sexual relations) until the wedding day.

## Saying "I Do" During Worship

Traditionally Christian couples wait to live together until after a worship service in which they pledge to be married as husband in front of witnesses and their entire families. Then the couple goes off to a reception and finally takes time for a honey moon. Then the couple comes back and lives together in one residence.

Some couples marry in a worship service dedicated just to their wedding. Others marry part of Sunday morning worship or even an evening service.

## Saying I Do Before the Wedding

# Ceremony

There is a growing trend within the Church to marry at the Court House or privately with pastor before saying "I do" in public at the church with all the family and friends. St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 approves of this practice by saying,

*Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man 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. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

It is better for two people to get married and be together than to hold off for years just because of societal traditions that you have to have a big wedding first. No get married, enjoy one another as husband and wife and ward off sexual temptation, plus you will be able to celebrate larger anniversaries! Then at the public worship service and reception that follows give thanks for the wonderful gift that God has given both of you. Even after you have saved up, wearing the wedding dress, doing toasts, and even the first dance are highly appropriate! This public "wedding" is virtually identical to a traditional wedding except that you are renewing your vows with all your friends in family.

There are other reasons people get married early before the wedding: some marry for financial reasons because of insurance or medical benefits, others marry due to immigration so they do not get kicked out of the country, and still others marry because it is the right thing and godly thing to do so that they can turn to God and live together with their spouse as husband and wife.

Despite these godly reasons for couples to marry, some have made couples feel taboo for doing the right thing. They say, "I will not go to the ceremony if they you already married. Madamenoir an online wedding advise site says it is okay to marry ahead of the wedding, but it is important to be upfront with the guests otherwise they might feel slighted!

Why even have a public wedding with hundreds of guess? I suppose it is not necessary, except that as Christians we don't go to the wedding service merely because this is they day they sign the legal document. Instead, we go so we can pray and ask God's continued blessing on the couple and their marriage. Plus, the Word of God has power to strengthen everyone at the wedding! After all, "Our Wedding Ceremony is to Help our Family and Friends Celebrate What God Has Already Done: namely he has brought two together as one!" Praise the Lord!

Now for those of you reading this article who have no serious commitment, don't rush into marriage, also don't live together to find out if marriage is right for you. Marriage is really about a life long commitment between one man and one woman. There is no way to try out a marriage other than to talk and get to know the person. You are either committed or you are not ready for commitment. It is wise to get to know the person, get to know all of his and her friends. Find out if they believe the same things and you are ready to commit to one another for life! Then if you want you could say, "I Do" before the wedding ceremony! God's blessings, pray, talk, and love!

# Marriage: What's the Big Deal Anyway?

In the culture of the United States a number of arrangements for the uniting of man and woman have been advanced. For example, it is now socially acceptable to live together as if married. Likewise, it is somewhat acceptable to go to a sperm bank and to conceive a child without being married. Although, it is still not acceptable to have "one night stands" it is acceptable to have consensual sexual relationships such as "friends with benefits," and/or consensual sex among those who are seriously dating as a step in the relationship.

As I reflect on all these man/woman relationship possibilities I can easily understand why many young couples choose not to get married. Since over 50% of marriages end in divorce and chances are that one of the couple's parents have experienced divorce, it makes sense that they do not want to experience the pain and hardship that their parents went through. In fact, this is the number one expressed reason couples give for not get married. Therefore the estimation by Census Bureau that 4-8 million people live together goes without saying. Other reasons given for living in alternative relationships, "sex readily available;" "sharing of rent;" "more individual free time;" "lose their job or unable to care for themselves;" "no sexual strings attached;" "free to see others;" "you can love'em and leave'em;" "no legal entanglements."

Yet, even with all the so called benefits, there are deeper issues at stake. Biblically the issues become apparent:

"God blessed them (man and woman, Adam and Eve) and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, . . . But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 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." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

Solomon says, "Train a child in the way he should go and he will not depart from it."

Jesus says of marriage, "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Jesus as the creator of the universe and designer of marriage recognized that marriage is of course about sex and reproduction, but it is also about commitment (two becoming one), appreciation (bone of bone), faith (creator creation relationship), and the nurturing of children. These deeper elements are often missing from alternative sexual relationships. Unfortunately cohabiting couples, friends with benefits, etc. do avoid divorce, but unfortunately they do not get lasting commitment and true respect. Why is this true? Because in these relationships partners can walk out at any time if they "fall out of love." Whereas in marriage, when a couple falls out of love, they make a commitment to work through the problem and even with help can and often do "fall back into love." This is the best held secret of life long marriages! This is where pastors and professional counselors can help and have been avoided in the past.

Statistics prove that God knows what He is talking about. In fact, one third of those who cohabit before marriage will divorce within 2 years and two thirds will divorce within 10 years. The old saying, "You can't teach a dog new tricks," rings through: No commitment before marriage is translated into no commitment in marriage. As a result, simply living together is not truly a "trial marriage" because there is no "life long public commitment (otherwise the relationship would be marriage!)" Thankfully, people today do want God pleasing commitment and life without divorce, but tragically they are trying to get in new ways that are temporary and often bring even more pain.

So what about marriage? God's Word and experience should warrant us to promote marriage as a church. After all, children

found in healthy marriage are more likely to grow up balanced. And the standard of living is often higher because husband and wife balance out their roles better (commitment is the key here). Healthy marriage provides commitment, acceptance, faith, and a place to nurture children. On a lighter note, one study found that the best sex is found in marriage as it compared sex in marriages to sex in cohabiting relationships.

What can we do as Christians? First of all where we have failed God calls us to repentance (sorrow, change in ones ways, and receiving of forgiveness). Where we have failed we are to accept Jesus forgiveness and move on covered with the forgiving blood of Jesus and empowered to change. Second, as we see others who have failed this area we should gently encourage them to see God's will from the scriptures and the benefits of marriage. Where people have failed can encourage them to recognize God is able to pick up the pieces of broken families, broken hearts from cohabiting relationships, and even love and value children conceived from adulterous relationships. This does not mean we accept, ignore, or fund sin, but how often we hold sins against people who have repented. This is tragic. It irks me as a pastor to see people still not associating with people simply because they still look down a past sin. When this happens the true sinner is not the former adulterer but the one who continues to judge.

I would challenge you to encourage marriage and healthy single-ness as good and pleasing. We as a church ought to celebrate anniversaries, promote children and family, value singles. We might even encourage dating as a good and God pleasing way of meeting a future mate. Likewise, we should support those who have gone through divorce, subjected to a broken commitment, or who have been widowed. As Christians, we truly have the medicine to help, God's plan for marriage and forgiveness through Jesus. We should not turn sinners away, but help them. After all, if we do we must turn ourselves also away.





