

Stage 4: Making the Decision

The key goal now is: “what questions do I need to answer before we can get engaged?”

Keep in mind that you are there to serve, not to sit in judgment over your potential spouse. Your relationship should be affectionate by brotherly love and care—not cold hard evaluation.

Make a decision as soon as is appropriate. Don’t wait for a sign.

Logistics will never be perfect.

Stage 5: Engagement

The goal in this stage is to get married. But, remember, you’re not married yet.

Plan a wedding, prepare for marriage.

Make sure you get premarital counseling from a Christian you trust, preferably a pastor at the church you will be attending.

Time spent together: Remember, you’re not married yet. That means that basically you’ll keep the same boundaries on time together as you had before you got engaged.

Topics discussed: Be careful how you discuss your future sex life together. You don’t need to talk about sex much during engagement.

Accountability: Remember, you are not married yet. Accountability is just as important now as always.

The wedding: Keep in mind that your wedding is ultimately an event of worship before God. Keep it simple (even humble), and keep it worshipful.

Questions/Comments? Email us at Deepak.Reju@capbap.org or Jamie.Dunlop@capbap.org

Core Seminars—Singleness & Courtship **Class 7: Stages of a Relationship**



Introduction

Last class: 3 principles that should govern dating relationships:

1. It has marriage as its goal.
2. It’s initiated and led by the man. Since we’re trying to figure out if we should get married, we want to begin to try on the roles we’ll adopt once we’re married.
3. It’s a community project. We should be getting advice and accountability from our church family, if not also from our parents.

Today’s class: From friendship to marriage – a relationship as a series of stages.

Stage 1: Friendship

Dating relationships should *normally* start out as friendships.

The main goal in any relationship is to love and serve each other as Christian brothers and sisters. So it is in this stage.

Men, be careful to state your intentions when you have them.

Ladies, if he hasn’t stated his romantic intentions, assume he doesn’t have any.

Why dating relationships should normally begin as friendships:

1. Once you start dating someone, you complicate your ability to figure out who they really are. Emotions make things cloudy.
2. When you date a friend, you start the relationship with all sorts of important knowledge about each other that’s difficult to get in a dating relationship.

So what does this look like as two people begin a relationship? ...

Men Initiate

First, the man must initiate asking the woman out on a date (Eph. 5:22-23).

Initiation means initiation. The risk is yours!

Women Respond

As it is the man's God-given role to initiate, so it is the woman's God-given role to respond.

“Does this mean that *generally* you just sit back and watch and pray and maybe it doesn't ever get off the ground?”

Feel free to respond to the man who shows initiation. Let him know if he's wasting his time, and feel free to appropriately encourage him if he's not.

Stage 2: Early Dating

The goal of this stage is to figure out who this person is. What are they like? What's it like spending time together? Do you enjoy each other's company?

Time together: At this stage, you don't need a lot of time just the two of you. Include others. Have fun together.

Accountability: At this point in the relationship, you need to bring in others who know your relationship and can help you guard your hearts (Prov. 4:23).

Stage 3: Intermediate Dating

The goal of this stage is to figure out what questions you need to answer before you can get engaged. You don't necessarily need to answer them yet—but you need to figure out where the potential barriers are.

Men, you want the decision to enter this new stage of your relationship to be clear, honest, and deliberate. Don't assume she knows the answer right away.

Ladies, this is your chance to be honest with him. If he's faithfully put himself on the line, this is the time to say, “no thank you.” Or, if you think marriage is a possibility, “yes, I'm right here with you as far as I know.”

Some questions to think through:

1. What are your goals in life? Do they head in the same direction?
2. How do you see gender roles working out in your marriage someday?
3. What past sins might affect the future of your relationship?
4. Which church are you going to join together where you can both thrive?

Warning: This may be a time in your relationship when you experience some conflict. That's no bad thing: you really want to see how you deal with disagreement and disappointment before you make a decision to get married.

This stage lasts until you have a pretty clear idea of what the “deal-breakers” might be in deciding to get married. Once you've figured that it, you're at Stage 4.