

## Stages of the Relationship (Week 2)

### Stage 5: Engagement

- Make sure you get premarital counseling from a Christian you trust.
- You'll keep the same boundaries on time together as you had before you got engaged.
- Accountability is just as important as always.
- You'll plan a wedding, but that shouldn't be the focal point of your engagement.
- Your wedding day is about God. It is a *worship service* where two people happen to get married.

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### Stage 1: Friendship

- A dating relationship should normally start out as friendships.
- "Run as hard and as fast as you can toward Jesus. Look to your left. Look to your right. Marry someone who's running beside you." (Tommy Nelson)
- Before you're married train your affections to value those things that God values (Proverbs 31:30).

### *Men Initiate*

- The man must initiate asking the woman out on a date.
- Part of the man's role is to protect the woman from unnecessary risk and vulnerability by providing a safe context.
- Keep in mind general biblical principles as you initiate. (1) Am I treating her as a sister, in absolute purity? (1 Timothy 5:2) (2) Am I consistently seeking the counsel of others? (Proverbs 15:22; 18:1) (3) Am I considering her as more important than myself, and putting her needs first? (Mark 10:43-45)

## **Women Respond**

- Take time if you need to think, pray, and get counsel—but don't let that drag on for more than a few days.
- Let your yes be yes and your no be no (James 5:12).
- Generally give a guy at least a date or two if he asks.
- Keep in mind that you should be gracious in responding to *klutzy* initiation by the guy.

## **Stage 2: Early Dating**

The goal of this stage is to figure out who this person is.

- Time together
- Accountability

## **Stage 3: Intermediate Dating**

The goal is to continue to build the relationship as you get to know this person better.

- Guy: You want the decision to enter this new stage of your relationship to be clear, honest, and deliberate.
- Ladies: This is your chance to be honest with him.
- One goal in dating is not immediate intimacy, but future intimacy.
- You want to start having some serious, one-on-one conversations.
- You need to find either *theological agreement* or *significant flexibility* as you discuss these topics.

## **Stage 4: Making the Decision**

The goal at this stage is to figure out: "What questions do I need to answer before we can get engaged?"

- Your relationship should be tempered by brotherly love and care—not cold hard evaluation.
- Make a decision as soon as is appropriate.
- God doesn't normally tell us directly what we should do.
- If you think that marriage is best for the two of you, then get married. Logistics will never be perfect.