

## Ten Things You Should Know About Dating

by Marshall Segal

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Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy.

Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.

"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..." Hebrews 10:24

**1. Live on mission . . . and then find a spouse.** Instead of making marriage your mission, make it God's global cause and the advance of the gospel where you are, and look for someone pursuing the same. If you're hoping to marry someone who passionately loves Jesus and makes him known, it's probably best to put yourself in a community of people committed to that. Join a small group, not just a group of single Christians but one actively on mission together. Get plugged into a ministry in your church that's engaging the lost in the local community. Focus on the harvest, and you're bound to find a helper.

**2. Keep the end in sight.** In all your dating, keep your last first date in mind. The only thing worth dating for is a marriage—a lifelong, life-on-life love like Jesus's love for us. Nothing else is worth all the risks we take when we begin to share our heart with someone else. Nothing else can protect us from diving in too quickly or jumping ship when things get hard. Nothing else can stand out enough from the world around us to say something significant about Jesus. Marriage has to be the big and beautiful goal of our dating before we are ever ready to date well.

**3. Marriage is worth pursuing.** When divorce rates are high and the surviving marriages around us seem broken, messy, and unhappy—and when there are plenty of other good things to keep us busy—lots of young men and women in their twenties and thirties have basically given up on marriage, or at least we've discounted it in our plans and dreams. Some of us have tried dating and been burned—confusion, rejections, sexual failure, breakups, or whatever else plagues our relationships. With all the pain, failure, and friction, it simply can't be worth it, can it?

Lots of not-yet-married people need to be reminded that marriage is spectacular and needed in our society, and that's because it belongs to God. The beauty of marriage far surpasses the functional, social, relational, and, yes, even the sexual benefits. For believers in Jesus, the importance and allure of matrimony ought to be deeply spiritual, missional, and eternal.

**4. Your boyfriend or girlfriend is no substitute for God.** So many people have tried to find ultimate happiness, significance, or ultimate belonging in the arms of a man or a woman. Marriage seemed like the answer for a while—a few years, a few months, a few minutes even—then it fell short. It left them wanting, even demanding, more from marriage, not seeing that their demands were too much for marriage. They blamed their emptiness, loneliness, and joylessness on marriage instead of seeing that it was never meant to satisfy their deepest needs. There are lots of bad reasons to get married, and the worst is that we think he or she could be what only God can be for us. I want us to win disciples by dating radically, by confronting the world's paradigms and its pleasure seeking.

**5. The Bible is the best dating book.** Many of us let the Bible sit like a statue on our shelf because we think it has very little to do with our everyday lives. Things have changed over time, so we think we need new advice. We think voices today have a better perspective and better things to say about today simply because they're living in it. The Bible had its day, and we're grateful for it.

But all we really need, for whatever decision, situation, or relationship we face this year is God's Word. The Bible says a lot about how we should relate to one another, and specifically about how men and women relate to one another. Even with sixty-six books and more than eight hundred thousand words, the Bible cannot speak *specifically* to everything every Christian will experience in this world throughout history. But it still promises to speak *meaningfully* to everything, including our pursuit of marriage.

**6. Dating is a group sport.** Just as in every other area of our Christian life, we need the body of Christ as we think about whom to date, how to date, and when to wed. While it's rarely quick or convenient, gaining the perspective of people who know us, love us, and have great hope for our future will always pay

dividends. It may lead to hard conversations or deep disagreement, but it will force us to deal with things we did not or could not have seen on our own. We'll find safety with an abundance of counselors ([Prov. 11:14](#)).

Invite other people to look into your relationship. Spend time together with other people, couples and singles, who are willing to point out the good, the bad, and the ugly.

**7. Intimacy belongs with covenant.** Intimacy—romantic or otherwise—is a beautiful and precious gift God has given to his children. But like so many of God's good gifts, because of our sin, intimacy is also very dangerous. The human heart is wired to want intimacy, but it is also wired to corrupt intimacy—to demand intimacy in the wrong ways or at the wrong time, and to expect the wrong things from intimacy.

That means intimacy between sinners is dangerous, because we're prone, by nature, to hurt one another—to do what feels good instead of caring for the other person; to promise too much too soon instead of being patient and slow to speak; to put our hope, identity, and worth in one another instead of in God. Intimacy is the prize of marriage and not of our not-yet-married relationships—intimacy is never safe anywhere outside of a covenant.

**8. God gives grace and strength for purity.** Grace doesn't undo the sins we've committed, but it redeems them and makes them work for our good. It never overlooks or okays sexual sin ([Rom. 6:1-2](#)). But it will cover every forgiven sin and cast it as far as the east is from the west, into the very deepest, most hidden and forgotten parts of the sea ([Mic. 7:19](#)).

Your past sexual sin cannot overcome the sovereign love displayed for you at the cross, and it cannot keep you from pure, blameless, and everlasting joy. That is, if you will believe in the one who took on your sin for you, even your sexual sin, and if you repent and pursue his purity by his grace in his strength.

**9. Breakups aren't the end.** Some of a single person's darkest days fall after a breakup. You risked your heart. You shared your life. You bought the gifts, made the memories, and dreamed your dreams together—and it fell apart. Now, you're back at square one in the quest for marriage, and it feels lonelier than square one, and further from the altar because of all you've spent and lost. *What if every relationship ends like this? What if I never marry?*

To the brokenhearted and afraid, God says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" ([Isa. 43:1-2](#)).

Breakups are often the deepest waters and the warmest fires in the not-yet-married life. But if we will trust God and run to him in our heartache and confusion, it's in those waters and fires that we will experience his nearness and love like never before.

**10. Dating well can showcase your faith in Jesus.** At its best, Christian dating displays and promotes faith in Jesus and his good news, and it's in step with the gospel before the watching world. I want us to win disciples by dating radically, by confronting the world's paradigms and pleasure seeking with sacrifice, selflessness, and intentionality.

Men and women in the world want many of the same things you want: affection, commitment, conversation, stability, and sex. And eventually they will see that the ground under your lives and relationship is firmer than the flimsy flings they've known. They'll see something deeper, stronger, and more meaningful between you and your significant other. More and more, as the world is watering down dating, your relationship can be a provocative picture of your fidelity to Christ and a call to follow him.

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