

Everything You Wanted ^ to Know About Dating & Marriage

Last Time, On Dating...

Dating really is about marriage... really this time

Before, what were the main reasons people may have dated? (including items from last week)

- because they could (someone liked them, and you liked them back)
- dating leads to sex (though dating not necessary for sex anymore)
- dating just for fun
- dating to relieve me of my loneliness

Casual vs. "Serious" Dating

- dating to get something out of it, "you can do better than that person..."
- dating for experience and/or sexual compatibility

Myths about dating are still myths for marriage

Dating for Experience – Is it valid to date people to get experience before marriage? Does logic and experience indicate that the more people someone dates, the better a partner this person is?

Compatibility Myth- What does "compatible" mean? If it means get along super well without really trying, then we have obvious problems. If it means we can have a great marriage if we work super-hand at it, well, then who isn't compatible?"

- compatible personalities – Consider what compatibility means. You have to work hard regardless of how well you initially get along.
- compatible goals – No such thing. When you become married, you both submit your goals, dreams, aspirations, and hopes for the sake of the other. Even if you both have compatible life directions initially (which is wise to consider), once you've promised to stand by each other, then the goals become secondary.
- compatible faith – no such thing biblically. (There's only complimentary faith, i.e., the same faith. See below on OT wisdom on intermarriage.)

"Harmless Crush" – (see more on that below)

Biblical principles for marriage (and dating)

What is marriage really about? Oneness.

And Jesus said to them, "... But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Mark 10:5-9.

What kind of oneness?

- Spiritual oneness in Christ
- Emotional oneness in love
- Financial oneness in providing for each other
- Social oneness in time together

Physical oneness in sex

In all of these areas, a marriage couple is one. Some implications:

To break that oneness is painful, unintended by God, and always damages us. Illustration of opening up a sealed envelope.

True intimacy is closeness in all these areas.

To grow intimacy in just some of these areas increases desire for other areas.

If it doesn't, you don't really want intimacy.

E.g. – I want to be physically one with you, but not emotionally one. Plus, that's not how God wired us. We want to be intimate beyond the physical unless we really twist our hearts.

Therefore, a couple that is growing closer in all the other areas but physical/sexual oneness will face what? ... increasing desire to complete that oneness physically.

The desire for complete oneness (intimacy) is not bad, and it's not conquerable.

The key is to cultivate that intimacy at the right time and in the right way.

Who you marry is perhaps the single greatest decision to affect your spiritual life.

Consider the OT command to not intermarry other faiths and royalty:

“Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Preizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters for whom after their gods and make your sons whom after their gods.” (Exodus 34:11-16, ESV)

Consider King Solomon. In 1 Kings 3, we read the beginning of Solomon's fabled rule, beginning with his famous prayer for wisdom. From chapters 3-10 we read Solomon established his rule, prospered, built the temple, dedicated the temple with thousands of offerings, and distributed justice. But in 1 Kings 11:1-2 we read the beginning of his downfall. And this downfall began in the beginning of his career, in 1 Kings 3:1-2. Solomon chose to marry someone (“form an alliance”) of another faith, and the wisest, most powerful man in the world had his heart led away by the woman he married.

Who you marry will always either become an idol/god, or leave you looking for something better, unless that person's god is the reason you stay together.

What you love determines who you love.

(Much of the following material comes from a workshop I taught entitled “Positive Attraction.”) Mark 7:14-23. Jesus teaches that it's not what's outside a person that defiles, but what comes out of a person from the inside.

“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” (Mark 7:21-23, ESV)

Cultivating Positive Attraction

I. We're all attracted to various things.

A. Attraction itself is not bad, it's not even neutral.

Of the things we're attracted to, some are good, some are bad.

I would say it's a good thing to be attracted to some thing. It's a sign of life to be attracted.

B. There are “positive” and “negative” attractions

Attraction itself isn't bad, but some of the things we're attracted are good, some are bad, some are noble, some we'll be embarrassed about in ten years...

Discussion: Have you ever tried to change what you're attracted to? How did you try? How successful were you?

II. How do you change what you're attracted to?

Example - Have you ever tried to not like something or somebody? How well does it work?

A. What do people do about negative attractions?

1. Some people lie to themselves saying they're not really attracted to that...
2. Some people try to tell themselves not to like that...
3. Some people just try to not like anything...
4. Some people say you can't control what you're attracted to...

B. But these don't work.

1. The first is denial.
2. The second is futile.
3. The third is both denial and futile!
4. The fourth is because they probably have never successfully redirected their affections. If they had, then you can't say it's uncontrollable. But you can. And people have.

C. Why are these attempts futile attempts of denial? Because that's not how the human heart, soul, and mind work.

Myth: I am attracted to something because of how beautiful, desirable, or pleasing that object is.

Reality: I am attracted to something because of what I consider beautiful, desiring, or pleasing.

Myth: What I'm attracted to says something about what/who that thing is.

Reality: What I'm attracted to says something about who I am.

Application: Who/what you're attracted to tells you and the rest of us the state of your heart.

That means, for example, there's no such thing as a harmless crush on another person... whether you're single or you're married!

That means, even if you're disciplined to do good things and not do bad things, but if you still desire the things that are bad for you, you haven't really changed. You've learned discipline, but you haven't changed.

That means, if you have changed and don't like it anymore, don't make the mistake thinking you've necessarily grown in discipline. You may have matured, but not grown in discipline.

III. You change what you're attracted to by changing yourself.

- A. Attraction isn't so much about the thing you're attracted to as much as it's about you.
- B. Therefore, you don't change what you like by just telling yourself. You need to change yourself.

Illustration of the Magnet... you can't change what it's attracted to. You have to change it.

IV. You change what you're attracted to by giving your heart a better object to desire.

- A. The heart can't be attracted to nothing. Your heart must be attracted to something.
- B. Selections from a sermon entitled "The Expulsive Power of New Affection" by Thomas Chalmers
 - 1. It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction... But what cannot be thus destroyed, may be dispossessed-- and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind... So the youth stops loving pleasure, because he replaces it with a love for wealth. And later on the desire for wealth is replaced by a desire for power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable...
 - 2. Using typical language...
Our desire for something rarely just stops by itself. But what can't be stopped can be redirected. A child may like playing with toys, which gives way to playing with video games, which gives way to playing with real money and power. In each case, the object of the desire changed but one thing stayed the same: the heart always has a desire for something... The de-

sire for one particular object may be conquered, but the heart having a desire for something is unconquerable.

Conclusion: You need two things to change what you're attracted to.

First, you need to experience real, deep change inside you.

Second, you need to have a new object of attraction to replace the former ones.

Only God through the Gospel can bring about this deep, real change...

Through the Gospel, Jesus changes you from the inside.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

The way to change what you love is to be changed by God's love. That's the gospel.

That you're more sinful than you dared imagine, but in Jesus you're more loved than you dared hoped.

Think of the desires you try to satisfy. Why not satisfy the desires that will never fade? And with a God who will never fail to satisfy?

Through the Gospel, Jesus becomes your new object of attraction.

Philippians 4:8-9

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

Concluding Practical Thoughts

If I could get a list of the things you're attracted to--romantic interests, music, foods, entertainment, school subjects, sports, games, shows, people, religions-- I would know more about you than if I spent this whole weekend with you. (By the way, that's one measure of how close your friendships and families are: do you know what your friends or family members really are attracted to?)

Can you change yourself? I mean really change yourself to not be attracted to those things that may be bad for you. And do you have something better to go for? In both cases, the answer is Jesus. Jesus can change your heart to change your attractions. And Jesus can be the new object of your heart. He loves you. He died for you. He rose for you. He calls you to turn to him and follow him.